

Thank you for a wonderful introduction!

President Vaughn,

Distinguished Platform Guests,

Family, Friends, and loved ones,

My Esteemed Faculty Colleagues,

THE CLASS of 2020!!!

THE CLASS of 2021!!!

Yes! We have gathered here TOGETHER today to celebrate multiple graduating classes!

I know that all great speeches have three key points,... there are three tokens of wisdom to help you navigate through the journey of life and assist you as you start your next season.

Sooo... this may not be a great speech, because I really struggled to find three things to tell the Classes of 2020 and 2021!

I came up with two, but they are two things these Classes already know.

First is Persistence! What can I tell the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021 about persistence?!?!

These graduates that came to campus 2, 3, 4 years ago, to learn how to learn, they were exposed to new concepts, theories and techniques on our beautiful, sunny campus. Then... they had to go away. And while away, they had to persist in their education. They persisted by learning to use new tools, by mastering emerging technologies then returned to campus to complete their degree requirements... academic requirements and standards that did not change the entire time.

The Classes of 2020 and 2021 know how to adapt and persist.

It's a well-known joke that all UT graduates earn at least two degrees, one in their chosen major or discipline and the other in Construction.

These graduates know how long it takes to replace a one-story building with a 7-story building and a parking garage.

These graduates know how long it takes to dig a hole for an Olympic size swimming pool.

More importantly this means that the Classes of 2020 and 2021 understand how to be patient as they go through the construction season,... they understand that during the construction season there will be minor inconveniences like

blocked sidewalks, noise during the day,

pop-quizzes,

unanticipated homework assignments,
additional projects,
another performance,

However, they also know to appreciate that once the Construction Season has passed, they ARE a wonderful structure WITH a solid educational foundation.

And that leads me to the second token of wisdom, ... be reflective,

As it was said earlier, we are all reflecting now. Some of you may have started reflecting in August as you entered your last semester, some of you may have started reflecting on this moment as you made travel plans, and some may have started reflecting this week after your FINAL... Final Exam...

As you thought about this moment, you didn't truly know it would feel like this...

Class of 2020... Class of 2021, you are here to be recognized for your significant academic achievements, alongside some of your closest friends and colleagues, in front of your greatest fans; your family, friends and loved ones, in front of your esteemed faculty and dedicated staff.

I hope that you appreciate how big of a deal that is and that this feeling overwhelms you with pride and joy and that stays with you.

Let moments like this carry you through more difficult seasons.... Like hurricane season.

Family and Friends...these graduates can tell you that during Hurricane season, UT experiences heavy rain and tremendous gusts of wind

The Classes of 2020 and 2021 can tell that when lightning strikes and strikes again, we... have a parade... that was a Tampa Bay Lightning Stanley Cup Hockey joke.

The Classes of 2020 and 2021, know that we can't always DODGE difficult seasons and the outcome may not be what we want, but as long as do your best and weather the storm, the Rays will shine!

Yes, that was a Tampa Bay Rays World Series pun

But the point is to continue to be reflective because we know the comeback is always greater than the set back.

That was a Tampa Bay Buccaneers Championship pun

Go BUCS!

These Graduates understand that CHAMPA BAY, is not only a place, but it's a mindset and the University of Tampa is at the center of both.

Class of 2020...Class of 2021 you are Spartan Ready, you have all the tools, shields, protections, support, knowledge and skills you need to succeed,... to pursue happiness, however, you define happiness. Like today, you have a village that will rejoice with you in your happiness, celebrate your successes and that can assist you as you overcome any obstacle.

In conclusion,

COUNT WITH FIGURES:

Class of 2020... Class of 2021 1) remain persistent, 2) continue to reflect over your accomplishments and the seasons you have do go through and 3) know that you are Spartan Ready.

That maybe three things. SMILE

Classes of 2020 and 2021! On behalf of the University of Tampa, Congratulations on all your achievements, we sincerely hope for your continued success and please share those successes with the University of Tampa!