

PENN BACCALAUREATE 2025

Interim President J. Larry Jameson's Baccalaureate remarks during Penn's Baccalaureate ceremony on Tuesday, May 13, 2025. A centuries-old tradition that has evolved along with Penn, this year's graduating seniors were celebrated during an interfaith Baccalaureate Ceremony that included speeches, musical performances, and readings from sacred texts.

Generosity and Reciprocity

Baccalaureate Photos by Eddy Marenco.



Interim President J. Larry Jameson delivering remarks at the Baccalaureate Ceremony on May 13, 2025.

[Introduction by Maxwell Brown, a senior and ceremony leader.]
Thank you, Maxwell.

Welcome. It's great to be here to celebrate Penn's Baccalaureate Ceremony. To the extraordinary Class of 2025, congratulations.

This senior class is truly remarkable. Among you are a Rhodes scholar and Rhodes finalists; a men's squash team that achieved a perfect season; and student-athletes who shattered records and led with distinction in the classroom. Your work has garnered national recognition—like the recipients and semifinalists of the President's Engagement, Innovation, and Sustainability Prizes—as well as the artists whose creativity has inspired our community. Among you are burgeoning scholars whose curiosity and rigor will shape our future. It's my honor to celebrate your success.



Students delivering remarks at the Baccalaureate Ceremony on May 13, 2025.

This baccalaureate ceremony is not only a celebration of your academic achievements. It's also a moment for reflection.

During my own academic journey, I was fascinated by the study of medical science. I was curious about the scientific basis of genetics, cellular physiology, and how the body works. I was eager to perform research and contribute to our collective understanding. But over time, I also discovered a deeper calling—caring for people.

There's something profoundly meaningful about applying knowledge in the service of others. In my work as a physician-scientist, that knowledge helped my patients lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. That sense of purpose continues to inspire me. It's the same reason I'm passionate about higher education. Supporting Penn students in reaching their full potential is part of my journey. Every day, I'm driven by the desire to make a difference.

As our seniors know well, Penn takes great pride in cultivating a community committed to being a positive force in the world. For those of you who come from faith-based beliefs, this spirit of service and connection may feel familiar.

One powerful way to live out this commitment is through the idea of a gift economy. In a gift economy, wealth isn't measured by what we have, but rather by our generosity and relationships with one another. Giving and receiving are acts of love, respect, and community. In a gift economy, everyone can flourish.

As you step outside this campus, remember that you carry with you the ability to cultivate a spirit of generosity and reciprocity. Your Penn education has equipped you with the tools needed to navigate a complex global economy. But your compassion, willingness to share, and commitment to others is what will truly transform the world.

In this moment of celebration, let's recognize the abundance we already possess. Let's honor the gifts we have received—and commit to sharing them freely. By doing so, we strengthen the bonds that connect us and help build a world where everyone can thrive.

Many thanks to the Office of the Chaplain for their great work in supporting the Penn student experience. Chaz [Howard], Steve [Kocher], and their colleagues provide spiritual guidance, support religious life, and have a zest for celebration and tradition that supports our vibrant campus community.

On behalf of everyone at Penn, congratulations on this graduation milestone. Go out and be a positive force in the world.

Thank you.



The Baccalaureate Ceremony included a performance by Penn Lions.

PENN COMMENCEMENT 2025

Invocation and benediction delivered during commencement on Monday, May 19, 2025, by Reverend Charles L. Howard, Vice President for Social Equity and Community and University Chaplain.

Invocation and Benediction

Commencement Photos by Scott Spitzer and Eric Sucar.



*Vice President for Social Equity and University Chaplain
Reverend Charles L. Howard.*

Invocation

Good morning, graduates, and all who are gathered here for this amazing occasion. Will you please join me in a spirit of prayer and reflection for our invocation.

Sometimes, when listening to the U.S. national anthem, we can focus solely on the voice of a gifted singer like Lee [Carlee Reid], instead of listening to words penned by Francis Scott Key.

The song tells a story of enduring over the course of a “perilous fight.”

These commencement exercises mark the end of your academic journeys with us, but they are also an opportunity to pause...and to give thanks for all that you, for all that we, have accomplished—even during these difficult times.

Thank you for these individuals who are graduating from one of the world’s great institutions of higher learning. They have engaged with chal-

lenging ideas, navigated a difficult curriculum; they’ve written papers, worked through case studies and problem sets, found breakthroughs in labs, handled demanding training in hospitals and clinics, served in schools and nonprofits, designed and built and created.

They have rehearsed and performed, battled athletically, volunteered and partnered around our neighborhood and the world. They have led through student government, planned events, campaigned and advocated for change.

All of that...while enduring many global, national, and indeed personal challenges along the way.

Perhaps drawing an analogy between navigating college or grad school and the bombardment spoken of in “The Star-Spangled Banner” is too strong. Yet, in a moment where so many in our world and country feel particularly vulnerable, and specifically targeted, in a moment when universities face unprecedented challenges, maybe we can relate to and hear the words of this old song differently.

May we remember that despite the challenges, you—we—are still here.

May we remember that you/we have made it through the night; your flag, our flags still stand strong atop this historic stadium and yet wave...

May this ceremony and these graduates be blessed.

May they be free.

May they be brave.

Amen.

Benediction

Not every University has their alumni weekend coincide with graduation like we do. I’ve so enjoyed seeing my classmates at our reunion and I asked several fellow alumni what advice they would give to graduates and what they said can be summarized by the following and I offer it as our dismissal:

Be kind. Be curious. Be a good friend. Be a healer. Be your authentic self. Be your best self. Be gentle with yourself. Try not to compare yourself to others. Be balanced. Trust your gut. Remember that you are the dream of your ancestors. Don’t underestimate what can be accomplished in one generation. Travel the world. Invest in yourself. Surrender to opportunity daily. Laugh a lot.

And savor life, because you blink and you’re suddenly at your 25th reunion!

And all of them said, congratulations, Class of 2025! Hurrah!

Remarks by Kathleen M. Brown, David Boies Professor of History, School of Arts & Sciences, and 2025-2026 chair of Penn’s Faculty Senate.

Keep Some Room in Your Heart for the Unimaginable

It is my honor, as chair of the Faculty Senate, to congratulate you on behalf of the University’s nearly 3,000 faculty on the great achievement of your graduation.

Today is a day for taking a deep breath after years of hard work; for expressing gratitude to the loved ones who have supported you; to hold close the friends who have accompanied you; and to reflect on the new chapter that begins right now. How will you honor the support of family and friends as you take your next steps in life? How will you live up to the privileges and responsibilities of a Penn education to move through the world as a force for good? Put somewhat differently, in the words of the poet Mary Oliver, “Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

My own improbable journey to this commencement podium never fails to fill me with a sense of life’s unimaginable possibilities. I am the child of a woman who became a single mother and faced the challenges of poverty and unemployment. Were it not for the support of federal welfare programs of the 1970s and the generosity of grandparents, I would have experienced hunger and homelessness. Those same programs made it possible for her to re-enter the work force and for me and my two younger siblings to attend college on full financial aid.

My personal history testifies to both the value of higher education and the obligations it confers on those of us lucky enough to experience it.

First, I encourage you to think of your education as the foundation for your own curiosity, humility, and willingness to engage with the world’s problems. You have learned a lot here at Penn, but we, your professors, do not want you to rest easy with this knowledge. We want you to continue to raise challenging questions and to upend old wisdom. This is the true purpose of education—to instill a restless curiosity rather than self-satisfaction.

Second, combining intellectual curiosity with humility is tricky. When we ask questions, we are acknowledging that we don’t know everything.



Faculty Senate chair Kathleen M. Brown.

Without listening to others, however, intellectual curiosity can become self-absorbed performance. If you want to make the world a better place, you need to listen and learn about others on their own terms.

Listening carefully, however, does not mean accepting what is said uncritically. Here I am reminded of Benjamin Franklin’s dictum “Half of the truth is often a great lie.” Use your curiosity and your critical thinking skills, honed here at Penn, to question what you are told and to wonder whether there is more to know.

Lastly, as you begin this new chapter of your lives, please hold onto the hope that the world can become a more just and better place. Again, the poet Mary Oliver is instructive: “Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable.”

Congratulations, Class of 2025.

Adapt Creatively



President J. Larry Jameson.

Thank you, Reverend Howard.

To our national anthem singer, Carlee Reid: that was inspiring, and “pitch perfect!”

Of course, the expert would be our Commencement Speaker, Elizabeth Banks, but more about this later...

Today, Franklin Field is filled with joy thanks to the support and pride of our families and friends. Let’s hear it for them!

And, from the audience, let’s hear it for our graduates!

Your class is historic for many reasons. For example, you have done something that only two classes in our entire history can claim. You are graduating in the same year that the Philadelphia Eagles won the Super Bowl. Go Birds.

You have other claims to history, too.

Many of you finished high school and started college during the pandemic. You persisted with graduate and professional studies through the twists and turns of COVID.

You have persevered and advanced in a world that is only changing faster—where, ironically, the word “unprecedented” is something we hear all the time.

When the ground under our feet is shifting, how do we find our footing? Here is one example. Earlier this year, parts of Los Angeles were ravaged by wildfire.

Many people—perhaps some here today—fled, lost their homes, or even loved ones. Firefighters from across the country came to help. LA neighbors rallied in support.

Not long after, I was in this area visiting alumni and Penn families. As you would expect, the conversation often turned to the fires and the methods for putting them out—including a technique called backburning, or fighting fire with fire.

This approach seems counterintuitive. But, the fire consumes available fuel—brush and oxygen—which can help slow the destruction. In this kind of crisis, firefighters need courage, cool heads, and—most important—they must adapt to succeed.

Across Spruce Street, at our medical school, you will find other examples of creativity and adaptation.

Dr. Carl June’s CAR-T cell breakthroughs are the whitecoat equivalent of fighting fire with fire. This novel approach unleashes engineered immune cells against cancer.

Despite decades of naysayers, Nobel Prize winners Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman developed modified mRNA as a new form of treatment. This technology helped end the COVID pandemic in record time, saved countless lives, and will revolutionize health care as we know it.

This is why we must continue to invest in research. Penn could not be more proud or more committed to these revolutionary advances, and the pioneering work happening in all of our schools every day.

From wildfires to wild innovations, the lessons are clear: In volatile times—when the pressure is on, the odds are long, and the stakes are high—adapting creatively can make a huge difference.

You are well prepared for this. Your professors, peers, coaches, and communities have been helping you hone your skills.

Watching you adapt in real time, I have observed three essential characteristics, all Ben Franklin traits that are memorialized in our values—and inscribed in our sidewalks!

They are: curiosity, creativity, and self-improvement.

First, curiosity. The drive to test new ideas, try new passions, triumph and stumble, and seek new friends. The boldness to try fresh adventures, even though they make you feel uncomfortable. The curiosity that secured a 2025 Rhodes Scholarship for your classmate, Om Gandhi. Keep feeding your curiosity. No matter how fast the world advances, you will be open and ready to seize opportunity.

Next, creativity. As you have grown at Penn, you have proven adept at novel thinking. You kickstarted businesses, created art and contributed to culture, leveraged AI, conducted original research, and excelled in patient care and service to our community. The winners of the President’s Engagement Prizes, Innovation Prizes, and Draw Down the Lightning grants are just a few examples of your creativity. Never stop creating or undergoing your own reinvention.

Lastly, self-improvement. Each of us and everything we do will be, to some extent, imperfect—with one exception: this year’s flawless season for our men’s squash team. And, let’s not forget the incredible performance of our women’s lacrosse team—for the second straight year, they advanced to the NCAA quarterfinals.

In already uncertain times, our flaws and failures can spark anxiety. That fear can hold us back. But the point is not perfection; it is that we always strive to be better.

Curiosity, creativity, and self-improvement: These are Penn values. They are your values.

Use them often, keep them sharp, and they will serve you well.

It is by adapting that you will help to shape the future.

Graduates, we are so proud of what you have accomplished. We will be even more proud of what you go on to achieve. As you join hundreds of thousands of Penn alumni, keep your Penn memories close, your Penn friends even closer, and know that this University will always be yours.

Thank you all. Congratulations to the terrific Class of 2025!

Provost John L. Jackson, Jr., introduced the Commencement speaker, Elizabeth Banks, and presented the academic honors during the ceremony.

PENN COMMENCEMENT 2025

Penn Commencement address delivered on Monday, May 19, 2025, by Elizabeth Banks, actor, director, producer, and Penn alumna.

Elizabeth Banks' Remarks

Thank you for that introduction, thank you to the Trustees for inviting me back, and thank you to President Jameson. Congrats to you on being named full-time University President—a job nobody in the world wants right now, so thank you for your leadership but also...maybe just lay low, man, head down.

Congratulations, Class of 2025, and good morning to the family, friends, parents, grandparents, caregivers, faculty, and my fellow nominees—I mean, honorees—on stage with me today. Are you all incredibly esteemed in your fields and I made *Cocaine Bear*. So. We're ALL doctors now.

Dr. Hau—or Light Lady, that's what my friends and I call you—she can literally stop light like a real life superhero, but it's me, Dr. Elizabeth Banks, who's been asked to address you today, presumably because I've been cast as an oversexed alcoholic multiple times, and that's obviously more relatable to all youse.

And because fellow alum John Legend already did it. He may be an EGOT but I have three MTV Movie Awards. For all you young people, MTV stands for music television so obviously they gave out awards for film.

As you know, I am a proud Penn Alum—College '96—and it's really fun being back in West Philadelphia, and to be standing here with all of you on this historic Franklin Field to celebrate your triumphant graduation.

Last night I hit up the Wawa, walked down Locust, past the Dueling Tampons—which I heard they might paint white? As if that's somehow less tampon-y? I also took the required photo with Penn's founder Ben Franklin, went to Houston Hall—where, back in my day, I had to go to check my email because laptops and phones had not been invented yet. Now, I know what you're thinking, "but Elizabeth, you look so young, like a person who's *always* had email." But no, I communicated through the actual mail.

And if I sent a picture, it looked like actual me.

Speaking of people who don't use email...I invited my parents here today, and the last time the three of us were together in this stadium, I was sitting where you are—very hungover in my cap and gown—which I wore over a black bikini (It's very hot on this field).

So, I know what you're all most worried about right now—how do you pronounce Schuylkill? Will I have to explain to strangers that I graduated from "not Penn State"? And what will I take away from this experience, besides some friends and HPV?

Well, I'm going to do my best to tell you. And like my career and our economy, this commencement speech is going to be a little all over the place. But I am a Penn success story, and since I'm also an actress, I'll just start by talking about me.

I was a voracious learner here—I was gonna get every penny's worth of my tuition. I learned some Shakespeare and about bias in journalism and why marijuana legalization is good public policy—30 years ago we knew this—and that climate change needs our urgent attention—30 years ago, Professor Robert Geigengack, RIP, was sounding the alarm on climate.



Elizabeth Banks delivering the Commencement address.

But the most impactful lessons I took away from my time here weren't academic, per se. They were mostly about *adulting*.

For example, I had a class with a tough professor that only met once a week, on Fridays. Because the class was small and met so infrequently, absences were not excused and would result in half a grade deduction—an A became an A minus and so on. Well, "so on" for other people—obviously, I had an A. Anyway, I went to the professor right away because my cousin's wedding was coming up and I had planned to drive down with my family on a Friday.

No problem, she said, but you'll lose your A. But I was expected to go, I told her. I couldn't let down my family. I promised I would make up the work, I gave her all the reasons why she shouldn't penalize me, but she stuck to her guns: "It's your choice and that choice has consequences in your life."

It felt impossible, what she was asking. My GPA versus my family? How could I choose between the two? I basically gave it the same weight as Meryl Streep deciding which kid to turn over to the Nazis.

Meanwhile, she was so blasé about the entire interaction because, in her mind, she was an adult talking to another adult. Which was honestly news to me. I still felt like a kid—and maybe some of you still do too—but she was telling me, "No, you're an adult. You have agency." What a powerful thing to tell a young person, right? You are in control of your life. And also, you are not entitled to anything. And yes, that second one sucks.

In the end, I went to my cousin's wedding and I took the hit. I drove to Tennessee with my family, including my grandmother, who sat in the middle seat for seven hours, and I had a wonderful time. My Grammy passed away soon after and my cousin, just a few years older than me, is gone now, too.

I've never regretted that choice. I didn't graduate Summa Cum laude and that's...never come up. Not once. The profound lesson I learned through all of this was that our values conflict sometimes. And it's making choices in those moments that help you clarify *who you are* and what you *value* in this world. That's *adulting*.

It's not just cleaning your hair out of the drain of a shared shower or sink—which you should absolutely do—it's the series of decisions you make when your values conflict: GPA or family. Creativity or security. Loyalty or personal growth. Love or money. Your path is guaranteed to be paved with these decisions.

You graduates are entering the world at an incredible time in human history. We're on the exponential curve now, baby, and going straight up. On the one side is artificial intelligence and the technological advancements that are coming for every industry, breakthroughs in medicine and gene therapies that will have us living longer and healthier than ever, some of which are being made at this very University. Meanwhile, on the other side... we have income inequality, climate change, and fascism. Straight up.

Your generation must root out and continue to solve the real problem



Elizabeth Banks receiving her honorary degree from President J. Larry Jameson.

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in this world, and let me tell you: it has nothing to do with the color of our skin, the ability of our bodies, the gender on our birth certificates, or what religion we practice, and everything to do with...money. The real division in this country, in this world, now more than ever, is economic. To be clear—there's plenty of money. It's just concentrated very very very far away from the bank accounts of most people. And we can't solve most problems without access to some of that capital.

The artist DeKooning said: the problem with being poor is that it takes up all your time. I came here as a scholarship kid, first gen, loaded up with Pell grants and work study, which is actually quite isolating. I never went on a spring break, I never studied abroad. I never had an unpaid internship—I needed all my time to be billable.

I was privileged to look like a rich girl, a city girl, a girl who had ridden in a yellow taxi and should rush Tabard, but no. I had, in fact, never ridden in a yellow taxi and should be a Tri Delt. I found a rusted ten-speed bike in the basement of a frat house, tuned it up, rode it for three years and left it unlocked on 40th and Irving the day I graduated. Why was I in the basement of a frat house? You know why. The point is...I didn't come to Penn to pursue a career in the arts—I came here to use the best tool for class migration that's ever existed—higher education.

And that's it. It was a low bar. Be employable, hopefully well-paid

When people ask me when I knew I wanted to be an actor, my answer is "when I got paid for it." Was I passionate about it? Sure. Did it bring me self-esteem and joy? Yes. But I was practical. Pragmatic.

But during my time here, I began to think differently—I was in control of my life. And I was working hard to build the confidence, the life skills, the connections, and the grit to believe success at anything I devoted myself to was possible.

Some of you know this already, but for those who don't—today represents an achievement, for sure. But what you're all getting today is not just a diploma, but a safety net. And I don't just mean the Ivy League degree. Nobody here—not a single one of you—got to this ceremony alone. Somebody encouraged you, loved you, bandaged your skinned knee, fed you, taught you. All of that support is your safety net, too.

And your job, from here on out, is to pursue anything and everything that scares you with absolute vigor because you have that safety net.

Here's what I did with mine:

When I got accepted to drama school—to pursue an acting career—the most impractical dream there is—despite a prohibitive cost, I went.

And after drama school, when I went to NYC and got offered a two-year contract on a soap opera that would have paid all my student loans and then some, I said: if I can get that today, I'd like to see what I can get tomorrow.

Money was suddenly a value I didn't always have to choose. I could invest in myself.

But, full disclosure, after turning down all that money, I called my mom from a payphone and cried hysterically. For the young people, a payphone



Graduates at Penn's 269th Commencement Celebration on Monday, May 19, 2025.

is a public phone mounted to a wall, sometimes in a box, that you put coins in to make a call. Also, coins are small round metal pieces of money.

So many of you are rightfully excited about what's next and worried about what you don't have yet—so let this be a reminder to appreciate what you've already got.

You have nothing to lose. You have loads of time. Use that freedom. Because your life isn't determined by your first job, or your second. Especially because those first jobs usually suck. Or are in a city you don't like. Surrounded by people you don't connect with. I went to grad school in San Francisco right after Philly and immediately knew I wouldn't be settling there. Naked people on bicycles is too much even for me.

You will need to keep expanding your idea of who you are and what you can be and let me reassure you: There is no pie. You all left incredibly competitive high schools to enter this incredibly competitive University or graduate program, and you're about to enter the incredibly competitive job market. So, I can understand why you may believe that life is a zero-sum game: that there's only so much opportunity to go around. If one person takes a bigger slice, everyone else must take a smaller slice, and the total size of the pie remains the same. That is true with actual pie. But not in life, and not with opportunity.

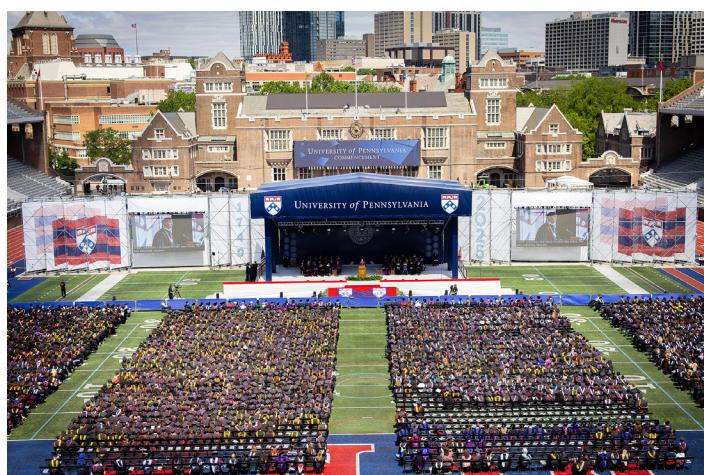
My advice to you is—as much as possible from here on out—take yourself out of that mindset.

Nobody knows about competition better than an actor—at any given time, 98% of professional actors are unemployed—like federal workers. So, when I didn't get my slices of pie—and there were lots I didn't get—I baked my own. In fact, I made cupcakes, cookies and brownies, too. Is this a confusing metaphor? Kinda, yeah. It sounds like I was baking all the time but also couldn't afford the ingredients. What I mean is: I used my agency to create my own opportunities: rather than wait for those great acting gigs, I started producing, writing, directing, hosting a game show, becoming an investor and entrepreneur, podcasting. Was this all in response to overwhelming disappointment? Of course. Failure is a great motivator!

What's better? All of that...made pie for other people too—I created jobs and opportunities for others by selling ideas for tv and movies, like the *Pitch Perfect* films, inspired by my time right here. Just ask Penn Masala who sang in *Pitch Perfect 2*.

The truth is, if the pie was real, there would never be any progress. People who didn't get their slice would just do what? Accept it? Many do, and their lives stay small. Blame someone else? That's petty and breeds resentment that serves no one. You're only ever competing with yourself. With the limitations you're willing to accept. With the smallness of someone else's idea of what you're capable of. So stop competing and start beating the pie lie.

If Jackie Robinson believed there was only so much baseball to go around, we wouldn't have the MLB we have today. If Billie Jean King and



Aerial view of Penn's 269th Commencement Celebration on Monday, May 19, 2025.

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Lily Ledbetter had just accepted it when they were told to be happy with what they got, the notion of equal pay for equal work wouldn't be a phrase recognized by every person in this stadium. Which reminds me: there's still a lot of work to do. We need bright, conscientious, positive people with expansive minds to do it. You are them. And I'm excited to see you fail!

That's right. You too will fail to get exactly what you want at some point, which is your best opportunity to clarify what it is you really want and pivot if you have to. You've got the safety net to do it.

"No, but I need *this* thing," you'll say. But in that single-minded pursuit, you'll risk ignoring all the other opportunities waving to you from the periphery.

At every perceived "failure," look inward and ask yourself what you're really after. Is it money, admiration, flexibility, credibility? Get real with yourself and then figure out how to get it some other way. *Your* way. Your path. Create. Collaborate. Build. Join. In my industry, we like to say, "rejection is protection." In time, I always came to see why I didn't get a part. I'm not *Legally Blonde*'s Elle Woods. But I am *The Hunger Games'* Effie Trinket.

And here's the thing about playing Effie—she was protected by a system she propped up, promoted and collaborated with—until she was overcome by empathy for Katniss and Peeta, unfairly treated by that same system and ended up in bunker helping the revolutionaries. That last part wasn't in the books. It's in the films because of what I brought to Effie—I gave her an emotional arc, a dash of empathy, a crush on Haymitch and I wore the hell out of the costumes.

I didn't accept anybody else's idea of what I could do with that part—not even the author who created her (Suzanne Collins). I took my opportunity—my little slice of pie—and did more with a limited role which rewarded me not only with a better part, but six years of guaranteed work that meant I could afford to start my family *and* pursue a directing career. In short, I built myself another safety net. Be on the lookout for them and use them wisely!

Benjamin Franklin himself didn't even dream this big when he founded this place—he just laid out some ideals and each successive generation has improved upon them.

Penn is a place of progress. I am that progress. A working-class girl whose parents didn't go to college, who waitressed for a decade, who persistently built her success with hard work, guts, a cup of ambition, and whatever else Dolly Parton sings about. And young people, if you don't get that reference, please watch *9 to 5*, as it's hilarious, and sadly all too relevant today.

Class of 2025: You are that progress now.

Harvard has her Crimson and Yale her colors too, but dear old PennsylvANIA has her Red and Blue and every other color too. And we are better for it. And it *is* the future. Because the problems of this world—that exponential curve—it's going to take *all of us*—everyone—to solve them. So, we need to spread the wealth. We need to invite more people to the solutions party, not less.

Alright, I've got two more quick things then we can all go day drink.

I found the love of my life at this place—on 40th and Spruce on a steamy evening in 1992. I've compared every potential partner to him since and he keeps on winning. He is my true safety net. And that's my relationship advice—find the person who gives you the confidence to do it all scared—tie your nets together—because co-creating your dream life and parenting kids is unfathomable with anybody who isn't going to catch you when you inevitably fall. Everything's great when everything's great. But when everything's shit, you deserve a partner holding you up, not keeping you down.

Finally, you're going to make mistakes. You deserve to learn from them. They shouldn't derail your hopes and dreams, which is why the last thing I want to leave you with is this: the biggest derailment to the future you want to build...is irresponsible ejaculation. I know all the doctors on this stage, me included, agree with my assessment—that's the cause of every unwanted pregnancy.

You—all of you, women *and* men—deserve to be able to determine whether, when, and with whom you become a parent, the greatest responsibility you'll ever undertake, so remember to *wrap it up* and keep abortion legal. Trust me, access to reproductive healthcare is the ultimate safety net—not only does it save lives, it's your insurance policy to the fun, healthy, successful, liberated, relationship-positive life that you've all worked so *hard* for—pun intended.

Congratulations Quakers Class of 2025. Thank you and may the odds be ever in your favor!



Alumni in the procession entering the stadium with flags marking their graduation years.



Graduating senior Carlee Reid sings "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the star of Penn's 269th Commencement Celebration.



Graduating seniors throw their mortarboards during Penn's 269th Commencement Celebration.