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Pomona College Commencement 2012
May 13, 2012

Good morning, I'd like to welcome the students, professors, deans, family and friends who have all gathered here today—especially mothers. We all know it's Mother's Day. As my mom said, "It's the only day I have to myself and I'm celebrating you." So here we are! (Hey, mom.) But most of all I want to welcome the Class of 2012. We are about to take our first baby steps as Pomona College graduates.

I honestly can't believe that I'm standing up here... that you're all sitting out there, and I'm really hoping that if this past week I spent in San Diego is any measure of how fast time goes when I'm not in any classes anymore, this speech—which I'm terrified of—will go by very quickly. Then I won't have to be standing here, you won't have to be sitting out there, and we all go do what we really want to do and go get some brunch ... But maybe that's just me. On the topic of brunch, I recently realized—and this will probably only appeal to the students—I'm going to have to start buying Cholula myself. It's a hot sauce they have in the dining halls. It's the most delicious thing and I slather every meal with it. And I'm going to have to spend real money. I don't know what I'm going to do. Cholula should pay Pomona College to serve it because we're all going to leave and spend hundreds of dollars buying it. That sriracha brand that they serve, too.

Anyway, I'm getting a little off topic.

I had to be careful when I sat down and started thinking about things to say to you all today. Of course I tried to think of witty phrases or funny jokes that I could incorporate, especially because I get to go before Ben Tumin. But everything really reeked of California. I don't know what's happened to me. Words like "dude," "totally," things that maybe I should just keep to myself—they kept creeping into my speech. But fortunately, my Pomona education has taught me that it's not okay to get up and say "gnarly" in front of a mature crowd, to say "YOLO" or "gnarly", especially in front of this more mature crowd, so I'll try to avoid technical terms.

In all seriousness, I wanted to talk to you about first times. It can be difficult to find something that everyone in our class agrees upon without getting too boring or too redundant, so I eventually settled there. Taking risks. Trying something new. Being scared but going anyway. I guess it's a fairly classic theme, but the one thing we can all agree on is that graduation is really freakin' scary. I came to Pomona looking like a 12-year-old, sometimes 14, and now they only sometimes card me when I go to Rated R movies. When did I grow up? When did my sophomore year end? When did they put that walkway over between Mudd and Harwood that I had never seen before in my life? Where are my friends going to be next year? Where am I going to be next year? Are we actually graduating? What is this?

When I was a senior in high school, I was so excited to graduate. I was stoked to come to Pomona. I applied early and I rubbed it in all my friends' faces. I went to Hollister and bought

those California t-shirts that were not cool, but at the time I thought that they were. Oops. But most of all, I was so fearless. I looked forward to graduating. I loved the idea of the next step.

But as my good friend John Cleese would say, "And now for something completely different." Why would we ever want to leave? I'm surrounded by my friends, my peers, people who every day help me to realize that there's a world of information out there. Ideas and perspectives that are different from mine. I like the way they put things. I like the environment that we're living in. I don't want to learn all those things in the real world because for me right now, Pomona is just fine.

The problem is that what the people of Pomona have really taught me is that the best person that I can be is a first-timer. It's easy to love the things that you're doing. It's easy to take classes in which you excel. It's easy to stay in bed on a Sunday morning until noon. And it's really easy to go to the CMC dining hall even though Harvey Mudd is serving steak and salmon.

But dark and difficult times lie ahead. Soon we must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy. That's my pal Dumbledore. I had to sneak in at least one Harry Potter quote in there.

What I really mean is if we always do what's easy and what's the same, then we never really get anywhere. We don't make any progress. My teachers have gotten me to take on extra responsibilities in my classes. My advisors got me to finish my Med School applications early and that was certainly a feat. Jeez, my friends even got me to get a bikini wax for the first time before we went to San Diego. And I was not ready and I was not willing, but we all do things for the first time. Maybe the first time you went down Mills on your longboard and you ate it, you didn't like it much. Or the time you drank 12 Red Bulls in one night to finish the final draft of your thesis, but at least you gave it a shot. And you learned something.

We might be leaving Pomona College, but there's so much for us to gain from what the people here have taught us. We're great students. All of us. We're always hungry for information and Pomona has only helped to cultivate that curiosity. Your progress in the future relies on your acceptance of who you are. So step finally back. Make sure you're making the decisions that truly reflect what you want, that you're constantly moving towards the person that you want to become. We have all made a home here, but it's time for us to move on.

We will always have the amazing memories that we created. Our class, our experiences, those pictures from move-in day in September of 2008 that are still on the internet for some reason, they will all remain. As you each go off into the world, don't forget the lived experience that we had here at Pomona. Maybe these four years went by faster than finals week, but the things that we've learned from the people around us can have a lasting effect, and all you have to do is let them guide you as move forward.

Congratulations, Class of 2012. And to end with my favorite quote, one that I really hope you can live by: "Hakuna Matata."

