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Well, first I have to say that the original intro to this speech relied pretty heavily on the fact that it's always, ALWAYS boiling hot outside at graduation. Well, I checked the weather report this morning, and...it's not. So I went to my Plan B, which was of course to make fun of the canopy. Unfortunately, our Class Day speaker, Michael O'Shea, made a hilarious joke about the canopy yesterday. So I had no Plan C, and here we are.

All jokes aside – not really, there's a lot more jokes – it was difficult for me to pick some kind of resounding message to deliver to all of you. Most of us have already had our minds blown during our time here, by our professors, our classes, conversations with our fellow students. Through academics and the causes and passions we've pursued during our time here, we've been able to start figuring out which ideas work for us. Which people have said and written exactly the right things. Which philosophies help us focus our lenses on the world. How to synthesize and organize information so we can present it in an educated and educational way.

But I gotta tell you something. For some reason, all those abstract concepts are totally failing me at this moment. I don't think any one of us could write one more page of thesis right now if you asked us to. Which I don't know why you would, because it's kind of our big day. The thing is, I have absolutely no frame of reference for how this moment feels. There's no getting around the fact that this is one of the standout days of our entire lives. And it's huge.

Which brings me to the theme of this speech, which I think will really speak to all of you and do justice to this highly significant day. That theme is...intense, crippling, gnawing, constant, all-encompassing FEAR. Complete terror. The kind that's born out of that awful question: So what's your plan? You got a job? That's great, does it pay? What's the cost of living in that city? It's an internship? What does that mean? What will you do? Does that look good on a resume? How can you start grad school so soon? You're gonna get a masters, a PhD? What're you gonna do with that? Wow, you're gonna travel? Got a grant? For what? Someone's PAYING you to study that? Take time off while you're young right? What's your 5 year plan? What's your plan? What's your plan? **WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS THAT IS GOING TO SECURE YOUR FUTURE?**

I am not trying to freak you out. Really. I know that anyone who grills me, or any of us, about our entire lives is just interested in our progress. Whoever asks you these questions is proud of you, thinks you're smart and capable and is curious to see where somebody like you is gonna go in life. The class of 2011 is truly a remarkable group of people. The things we do are awesome. Today is a day to recognize what we do.

But that's where the fear starts to set in. When you start to get consumed by doing, by wanting to map out all of your next steps, by reviewing your resume and thinking about what's next. I know I can't get away from it. When I was considering what I should say here, I called my mom for advice, 'cause she's always telling me that I'm wonderful just the way I am, you know?. I

get her on the phone, she says, “You know what I was thinking about with ya speech? Ya never know who’s watching.” “Well, yeah, I know,” I say. “There’s like 2000 people here, it’s pressure enough.” “Yeah but out in that crowd, there could be a Fortune 500 CEO, and he could say to himself, gee, I should give her a job. Everything is networking.” She’s right. Any second, you could score the right opportunity. But somehow I think that brings more anxiety than confidence.

You may have felt, during these last couple of weeks, that you don’t know how to define the many feelings you’re having, except that they’re neatly wrapped in a ribbon of general uneasiness. Today, the only thing I’m interested in talking about is not what we’ve done at Pomona, but who we are. I want to address a different kind of fear, the kind you get when you look in the mirror and realize that you are older than when you first got here. That you have changed, and it’s irreversible. That the process of becoming the future you, the adult you always imagined...it’s already started without you noticing.

I feel that, and I’m pretty sure that you feel it, too. Four years seems like a big chunk of our lives, and college has been jam-packed with stuff...but when it’s time to let it go, to grow past it, it feels like it could have been nothing but a dream. Collectively, we have done everything imaginable to leave a mark on this campus, but today we are transient. We’re leaving. A horde of first-years will soon be stampeding the halls, occupying all the spaces where we made significant memories. For me, at least, it’s extremely difficult to imagine somebody else just starting their journey at Pomona. I kinda hate the fact that somebody else is gonna be sleeping in my bed and eating in my dining hall and using my shower. I hope they never figure out that you can only get hot water when you turn the dial to cold. I am sad that we all made a home here and now it’s time to move on.

I look around at all of you and I see dozens of little families, groups of friends that have been there for each other since those first few severely awkward days. We have really built something together, and we are inextricably tied to each other. We didn’t just go to college, we are college. This physical place will remain standing, but Pomona for us is a collection of 395 individual experiences. It was one long glorious moment, and it ends this morning.

And that’s why today I choose not to look forward, or to step backwards. Four years just went by, and it felt like four days, and no matter what you do in the future, this feeling will come over you again. You will enter a new job, or grad school, and eventually things will change. You’ll have to move. Make new friends. Accept the end, again and again and again.

But every time, from this day forward, that you prepare yourself to sever ties with a place, or people, I hope you will remember that your life is not a series of start and end dates and locations and references. Please keep with you the fact that it does not matter what you do, or where you’re going, but who you are. How you feel when you wake up in the morning. How satisfied or excited or happy you get when you answer those questions about the next step. Who your friends are. Who really knows you, and who you’d like to get to know. All the emotions that you can’t capture about Pomona, about the people you love, about graduating, the fear; they are of paramount importance. They are the only things we’ll take with us.

How your future plays out is completely dependent on you looking inwards. Be honest with yourself with every choice you make about every next step. It is a trap to worry about impressing others. We have the education and the skills to keep on climbing up that ladder.



Climb as you will, but make a home wherever you end up. Time does not pass, we pass, and sharing yourself with others is the only way to make every day real. Pomona is over, but that is still a beautiful thing, because we LIVED it. We were present. And there is no greater achievement.

With the highest respect, I wish the best for all of you. More success, more memories, more of your youth, more good days are just around the corner. Don't be afraid. Thank you, and congratulations.