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Welcome to all friends, family, faculty and staff, distinguished guests and misunderstood uncles thank you all for being here today. As some of y'all may know, a group of benevolent seniors took a service trip to San Diego last week. We helped the elderly, read to children and did all of the things one would expect of a respectful Pomona graduate. It was among this apex of humanitarian efforts that I decided to pen this speech. But as I sat in the San Diego sand, thinking about how I could condense four years of presumed wisdom into a few words that would resound for a lifetime, I felt a little overwhelmed. Ideas rushed about left and right. Should I talk about whiskey drinking lessons learned from Professor Lorn Foster? Perhaps parental piety would be nice? A discussion on Patriotism, Title Nine or Mental Health might also suffice. Dreams or laws? Pithy platitudes or pragmatic prescriptions. I was tossed in a tumultuous whirlwind of ideas.

I was lost.

Out of exhaustion, I couldn't help but let my eyes wander from my blank page and onto the boardwalk. And there it was. He struck me like a slow whisper from a muse - Slo-mo, the Mission Beach folk hero, skated down the boardwalk and onto my page. At that moment, I knew I could only give one message: slow down.

For those of you out of the know, Slo-mo was recently featured in a NY times op-doc. Here is a man who skates down the Mission Beach Boardwalk day after day in a state of utter serenity. Before Slo-mo became Slo-mo, he was John. As he described himself, he was a "Typical, institutionalized, educated, Western Man," who promoted his pocketbook before his spirit. He was a successful neuropsychiatrist who had attained all that mainstream mindsets thought desirable. He had wealth and power, influence and respect. He lived the dream of our friendly neighbors north of 6th street. In his own words, "He was an jackass."

Although I might tempt naïveté by questioning a man that has acquired more wisdom and consumed more hallucinogens than I ever will, I think he was mistaken. It is not that John the neuropsychiatrist was simply a jackass, it was that he didn't slow down in his past life, he didn't think critically. John, like most Americans, found himself speeding along the regimented path, falling for the trappings of modernity and all its red herrings to happiness. But he was not alone. Every year over the last 4 decades, researchers at UCLA have polled incoming Freshman classes. In 1966, only 42 percent of freshmen cited being well-off financially as an essential life goal. By 2005, a whopping 75 percent of freshman reported that being well-off financially was essential. This earnings arm-race has left crucial casualties in its wake. In our rabid pursuit of riches, we sacrifice sacred humanity for gilded hopes. In 1966, 86% of college freshman reported that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was an essential life goal. Today, less than half of us heartless millennials deem developing a meaningful life philosophy important. Now that does not imply that our grandparents were perfect – lest I remind you that y'all elected an actor named Reagan for governor that year. But these trends are disturbing. Instead of living more meaningful lives, we seem to be regressing. Langston's Ancient Endless chain of profit, power, gain seems to be ensnaring more souls like bad religion. These trends show us that folks are feeling more and more squeezed by a system that's rapidly eroding our mythic Middle Class. They show us that we are abstracting away that which is unquantifiable and beautiful about the human experience for the

efficient and productive features of rapacious capitalism. Open pastures become captive to corporate offices. Nature's silence gives way to man's noise. There is no consent in this deed. Only impersonal modernity rationalizing itself into oblivion...or at least climate change.

But hey, there's reason to be hopeful. For the very rationality that compels modernity can also counter it. Thankfully for you all, you've just spent the last four years sharpening the skills needed to Slowdown. The true fulfillment of a Liberal Arts education forces an individual to Slow down and think critically. Everything from our small class sizes to our evolving breath of study requirements encourages deliberateness and reflection. Remember your rare grooming and slow down. Before you rush through rote societal roles, slow down. When technology and the incessant drive for quantifiable efficiency innovates away the inarticulate beauty of humanity, slow down. When overly deconstructed individuals dissolve communal ties without constructively establishing new bonds, Slow Down.

4 decades is a short time span for this profit-oriented perspective to proliferate, but our underlying human nature moves much slower. Regardless of how we may posture on the surface, people still want good families, good values and good communities. Slow down for them.

As we walk through those college gates together, know that your boardwalk need not be years or miles away. Know that you can live your boardwalk now if you simply Slow Down. Thank you.

After a weekend of sitting through ceremonies in the sun, it sure is nice to sit in some shade for a change. Isn't that right?