

It's surreal standing in front of you all at our graduation. I think we should take a second to process this together. If you will, please join me in taking a deep breath and smell the bay breeze one last time.
breathe in *sigh out*

Some of you may know who I am, and if you don't, there's a good chance you've at least seen me scurrying around campus in various colored button-ups. Over my time here, I've dabbled in almost everything there is to do on this campus, and it's given me an amazing opportunity: The honor to watch you during these years no matter what corners of campus you stuck to.

Before I continue, I want to make this speech a little exercise, so if you'll entertain me, please close your eyes. Let's take a few more deep breaths, listen to the waves crash, and the birds chirp. Now, keep your eyes closed and when I mention something that relates to you, open your eyes.

Now back to me being a caffeinated fly on the wall. In these four years, I've gotten to watch us all grow. Maybe we've never met, but being seen is the New College experience. We go to such a small school that allows us to have one-on-one support, narrative evaluations, and all kinds of opportunities. This goes beyond and means that we probably gave each other the New College smile, passing by on the overpass even though we don't know each other's names. It also means I got to learn other parts about you. I remember overhearing your conversations about the quality of the cafeteria food, what events you planned to go to this weekend, and how your coaches have been on your ass recently. I've seen you out in the grass field making goals, spiking on the sand court, and readied in the batter's box while your team cheers you on. I've seen you wearing your NCF polo giving tours, putting on events, tutoring, and coaching.

I've seen you scribble what looks like hieroglyphics on the library white boards. I've seen you picking the ripe and *delicious* mulberries, taking out invasive plants from the NPRA, and cleaning up the food forest. I've seen you at dinner tables that would put the Last Supper to shame and I've seen you sit blissfully alone watching YouTube documentaries. I've seen you walking your dog in the morning and, unfortunately, I've seen you pick up their feces.

I've also seen you in the library with your head in your palm trying so hard to osmosis your notes or understand whatever demented language your tutor was trying to speak to you in (it was chemistry). I've seen you at the START center trying to figure out the random hold on your account or why your financial aid isn't updated yet. I've seen you coming back from a game to the cafeteria right as it's about to close, or even going to the U-Cook once it already did. I've seen you walking across campus gazing at the floor in front of you just trying to get to the next thing on your Google calendar. I've seen you just barely hold your tears because this girl has no time to cry, she has a thesis to write. (#girlboss). I've seen relationships blossom, and I've seen them wither from uncertainty of their future.

But I've also seen some of your final presentations for that **one** last class you needed for your AOC. I've seen you defend your grueling, thesis. I've seen you put on amazing performances, whether it was music in Sainer or College Hall, theatre and dance in the BBT. I've seen you in the tech booth, films in Sainer Pavilion, or at a set in the Nook. I've seen you at the fitness center sunbathing and working out, and at the waterfront kayaking, paddling, and sailing. I've seen your beautiful art displayed on event posters, art galleries, and at the library. I've seen you at senate meetings hard at work in your NCSA roles for our students. I've seen you through the Heiser windows working in the lab, out in our bay collecting water samples and

oysters. I've seen you featured on the CEO's LinkedIn studying abroad, doing internships, presenting at conferences, and getting into programs. I've also seen you get jiggy at the walls and I **thankfully** haven't seen what you did *after* said wall. *ahem* *realign papers against podium*

By this point, I hope the exercise succeeded and you all opened your eyes. Now feel free to look out at the beautiful bay, below you at the luscious grass, or up at the clear sky. *breathe in, breathe out*

When scheduling my Bacc to know how many people I should invite, I kept referencing the question "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, did it even make a sound?" I hope there's no philosophy AOCs out there to dispute me on this but, the obvious answer is yes, it did. The real question is "did it matter?" For those of you who feel so alone in your bubble, having gone through all of this, feeling like this tree being so loud but heard by no one, know that I at some point got at least a glimpse inside and probably experienced it with you. Some of you who don't know me probably don't really care that I did though, so, look at the people to your right, your left, behind you, and in front of you. There are roughly 200 of us graduating today, 200 people who have lived at your side these last four years, seeing and experiencing the same things. And we're not the only ones who saw you: your family, your friends, your teammates, and your coaches, professors, and advisors. I'm **so proud of you**, and I would make a bet to say that they are too.