

Good morning, honored graduates of Warren College. And to their supportive friends and families, thank you so much for coming out today to celebrate this momentous achievement. I'd first like to offer my sincere congratulations to UCSD's class of 2007. It is no small feat to complete a degree at this university, one of the most prestigious in the world. We have all endured the trials and tribulations that our years here have presented, from midterms that arrived all too quickly to finals that we thought would never end. We worked hard at UCSD for the *majority* of the year. But for one day each year, one glorious day we like to call Sungod, we played hard as well. There is so much more that defines our experience here, but it is different for each individual. Some discovered their niche within the greek system or athletics, while others have joined the social activist community. What unites us all is that we've navigated these character-building years together, and we've developed lifelong friendships along the way.

The celebrated graduates come from myriad backgrounds. Some of us are first- or second-generation Americans, and there are those of us with ancestors who arrived on the Mayflower. We all have at least one thing in common: relatives who decided to leave the countries from which we get the color of our skin, the tint of our eyes, and the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. Often, they were frustrated at the opportunities available in their home countries. Perhaps they sought a higher quality of life for their families, or freedom from persecution, and they envisioned a land in which these things were possible. This has been called the American dream, and the fact that their efforts were rewarded is evidenced by your presence here today. As a result of their hard work, we have had the opportunity to learn economics, environmental systems, political science, and engineering from faculty who are the foremost experts in their respective fields, and it has allowed us to become leaders ourselves.

With leadership comes responsibility, and we have arrived at the crossroads at which we must choose how to employ the knowledge and skills that we have acquired. The decisions made by our generation will echo throughout the ages, because this is a transitional period in world history. As Toni Morrison said, [quote] I'm hesitant to describe or predict the future because I'm not even certain that it exists... That is, not while finite humans in the flux of time make decisions of infinite damage [endquote]. We are faced with the challenges of famine, genocide, war, terrorism, water shortages, mass extinction, deforestation, climate change, and a burgeoning gap between the rich and the poor. I'd like to highlight this last issue as an example,

because we are the first generation ever with the potential to end extreme poverty, but we are currently letting the most unfortunate lag further behind. For the first time, we can imagine a world in which every single individual has access to food, clean water, and basic health care. But to achieve this goal, we must realize that the American dream is outdated, and it must be supplanted by a global dream. A well-known authority on globalization, Thomas Friedman, has defied all of our scientists and suggested that we live in a flat world, referring to the way in which modern methods of communication, commerce, and transport have made it easier for individuals to exert influence on others around the world. One must realize that one's neighbors now extend well outside of traditional bounds, and one's own success depends upon the success of the rest of the world's citizens. Thus, the essence of the global dream is that we must no longer seek to advance our own cause purely for our own ends; instead, our achievements must occur within the context of helping others to advance their own causes as well.

This great nation was founded upon the principal that every man, woman, and child has the basic "*unalienable rights*" to "*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*;" The Declaration of Independence applies to all people, not just Americans, and it is about time we strive to achieve this long overdue vision. The global dream demands that we see ourselves as global citizens, so as we enter the world today, go with an open mind and an open heart, empathize with those less fortunate than you, and try to incorporate ways to contribute to a more egalitarian society into your everyday life. This need not entail self-sacrifice, for those most successful at helping to better the world are following their hearts and doing what they love. Achieving personal satisfaction and contributing to society are not necessarily mutually-exclusive goals, so pursue your own happiness while being careful not to tread on the toes of your fellow human beings. Accepting this may require a paradigm shift in our nationalistic perspectives, but this is what we must strive for.

I ask that you leave thinking that idealism is not simply a phase in life. It is a way of life, and if you maintain it then we can achieve the brighter future that we have all envisioned, a future that is not plagued by never-ending poverty or environmental degradation. We can turn that shared vision into reality because the future is in our hands. Enter the world and use the tools that we have acquired for the benefit of humanity and the earth on which we must live, for we are the leaders that we have been waiting for. Thank you.