

Change

Good evening, Class of 2025, friends, family, and faculty. I want to thank you all for being here today and for supporting this Class in our endeavors so far. I am honored to be up here speaking to you all today. I want to thank my parents, mentors, and friends for supporting me and for getting me to where I am today. I truly cannot express my gratitude enough to each and every one of you.

I want to start by having you picture a situation that I'm guessing many of you have found yourselves in before.

When you're driving on the highway, you often need to change lanes to keep your pace, avoid obstacles, or simply move a little quicker. Now, when you go to make your lane change, if you're anything like me, you may experience some discomfort, maybe even some dread. You might be thinking, "Oh, am I going to do this right?" "Is this worth it?" "Maybe where I'm at isn't so bad." "They're only going 10 under the speed limit". "If I just stay here, I don't have to worry about the lane change". "It's the safer option".

"I'M MORE COMFORTABLE HERE"

Comfort makes us feel safe. We desire comfort, which makes sense. Why would we want to be uncomfortable? That's a dumb thing to wish upon ourselves. But the discomfort that we feel in these situations is change. It's that lane change on the highway that gets us out from behind that semi truck that was going 10 under the speed limit. Usually, change is something we don't necessarily want to do, but I would argue that it is something we should all look to embrace, especially as we enter this new stage of our lives.

For a lot of us, change is something that we often dread, delay, and even fear. We remorse the old ways and worry that we won't be happy with the newness that comes with change. I

know this to be at least true with me. But in these last few weeks of high school, change has been central on my mind. In this stage of our lives, all we are hearing about is change. The change that's coming to us, whether it be going to a university, a trade school, or directly into the workforce. The change for our families as we become more and more independent and are around less often. The change for our friends, who now will only contact us through a text rather than the face-to-face conversation we looked forward to in that one science class at school. All of this change can feel overwhelming. I know it has for me. But as I continued to think, I realized that I was focusing on the wrong side of this idea. Despite these things being true, I'd also like to recognize the good that change will bring. The opportunities that our universities, trade schools, or new jobs will bring. You will each find experiences you never even realized were out there. With your independence from your family, you now have the opportunity to make a life of your own creation that you can share with your family. Whether it be a house that you are proud to have guests over to or the restaurant in your new town that you just know, your family HAS to go try. You will meet new people who will show you things you never thought you'd find. You'll build more connections, have more stories, and make new friends to go out with on a Friday night. These new opportunities and experiences only come through with change. It's a scary step, but I have all of the confidence in the world that this group, the Class of 2025, can take that step.

And I understand, you may be thinking, "This is crazy, he's up there talking about change, but when have we actually had to change?" "What experience do we have that will show us that yes, it will all be okay?" Don't worry, I have some examples. Some of you may have moved here from somewhere else. That was a change. For my sports people, you have been on teams that, every year, have new players. That was a change. For my artists, you have likely tried a new technique out on a piece you loved, and it was made better by that new technique. That

was a change. When we went from middle school to high school, that, for some of us, was one of the biggest changes of our lives. It was one for me. I spent the last few weeks of middle school worrying and worrying about the change to high school. Changing from the place I was so comfortable in. I spent the summer like this as well. But I had some very important people tell me that this change, the change I was dreading for so long, was something that would bring me so many new opportunities. So many new experiences that I could only dream of. I can proudly stand up here now and say that was completely true. I have met people I never could have imagined I'd meet and call friends. I have participated in activities that now hold some of my fondest memories. All of this was only possible with the change that I had been dreading for way too long.

I hope you are starting to see the pattern.

So, as we all are about to experience a massive change, each of ours different than each other, I encourage you to embrace the change. It's okay to look in your rearview mirrors for a short time. To reminisce on the good times, to miss your old friends, to miss the old experiences we once had. I want you to still look back and remember watching the winning kick at the St. Francis football game. Remember the fun of Spirit Day, the Christmas activities, and Prom. All I ask is that you be careful of living in those moments for too long. To be careful of that comfort. Eventually, you'll have to put your focus back on that semi truck in front of you, going 10 under the speed limit, and realize you just have to change lanes. You have done it before, you will do it again, but most importantly, you will be successful in it. My point is to have a little bit of excitement for change as we move forward from today. Be excited to have the chance to go a little faster on the highway. Be excited to try a new restaurant on your regular pizza night. To take a walk through a new park or to find a new coffee shop. Be excited to meet new people with

who you can have new experiences and memories with. If I can leave you with one thing, it's this. **Don't be afraid of the change that can change your life for the better.** To the Class of 2025, parents and teachers, family and friends, embrace that lane change because I promise you, you'll be glad you did.

Congratulations again, Class of 2025, and Go Ramblers.