

Thank you, Dean Gossett. Good evening Provost Sheley, and other distinguished guests on the platform... and most importantly good evening to all of the graduates and their family and friends, and faculty who are here to celebrate this important occasion.

Thank you so much for the honor of speaking to you this evening.

Now I realize that most of you have *never* heard of me before and those of you who *have been in my class* just panicked and looked at your cell phone and shot a quick text message to your family that said better “move the dinner reservation back an hour.” But they told me to keep it short and I will, so don’t panic.

As a faculty member in the Sociology Department for 10 years now, I have had a lot of time to reflect on what it is... about teaching at Sac State, and especially teaching in the College of SSIS, that I find so rewarding... And I think the reason that tops the list is how energizing it is to work with students who are so other-centered...looking beyond themselves to how they might help others. In fact the volunteer work that I do now, I learned about from 2 former students.

By virtue of the commitments you have made, and through your choice of major and areas of study, you already see that we are ALL interconnected, not just with our local communities, but with our national and global communities as well. Many of you are already committed to pursuing careers or volunteer work that will embed you in your local communities. Your influence there, I truly believe will have impacts on the direction that California takes, and will have transformative ripple effects in the national and global communities as well. Some of you will undoubtedly move into influential positions where you will have direct impacts at those broader national and global levels.

So please take a moment to reflect on the value of what you learned from the faculty, or from fellow students in your major...reflect on the value of what you learned in courses that may have been *outside* your major...when you were perhaps frustrated and felt like having to complete 120 units was a hoop to jump through... odds are there were some insights and perspectives from your elective classes that you wouldn't have otherwise come across.

And when talking with people who may not see the value of a college degree, or the value of the social sciences, or to people who may see higher education as primarily a path to personal financial gain, share a little with them about the *many* different ways your college experience has been of value to you. Talk about the importance of interacting with people from diverse backgrounds. Talk about the compassion that comes with a broader understanding of our world, and the importance of the social sciences *in particular* for looking beyond the simple individual-level explanations for our societal problems...share the broader worldview that many of you have gained not just through your coursework at Sac State, but through your own life experiences while here.

When the value of higher education is questioned, I hope you will speak up and energize others the way you have energized all of us, and especially your faculty, here at Sacramento State.

Thank you so much for your attention, and congratulations Sacramento State class of 2011.