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President of the Graduate Student Senate

Commencement Greeting – Sunday, May 22, 2022

Today marks one of the greatest academic achievements for each of our graduates. Graduates who have endured and persevered during a major global pandemic to get their degrees.

Having to balance your research, TA'ing, writing, classes, and personal time is probably one of the hardest things. A juggling act we never get quite right. Graduate school is tough! I remember defending my proposal right before the pandemic; I would tell myself "it is fine....it can't get any more challenging" Well boy was I wrong.

Work happens. Life happens. I study lakes so I spend a good amount of time on boats – I do work on Lakes Champlain and the Great Lakes and something I learned is that you can't control much.

You can't control the weather, how field work turns out, how many fish you collect. However, one thing you can control is your attitude and the way you approach life.

One thing is clear – this graduating class's approach to life is to find a path to the finish line. And guess what? Through that endless determination to get through all of the trials and tribulations of obtaining a degree, to get through all that is out of our control, we have a class of emerging scholars, ready to take that determination out into the world.

When times get rough, I hope each of you can look back and reflect on all of the accomplishments you've made during this time and know that you have strength, courage, and all that it takes to achieve all of your goals.

St. Francis of Assisi is known to have said “all the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” This class has shown that light to be their dedication and commitment to excellence. You’ve all survived - not just a pandemic, but: edits from your advisor and maybe reviewers, countless meetings that could have been an email, and all the long nights spent writing - or at least trying to write.

And no matter how tough times get I hope each and every one of you remembers your light and that you continue to persevere, accomplish all of your life goals and fulfill your dreams.

Here’s to having your weekends back!