

Hello and congratulations, Class of 2018! You did it!

You know, this is a special Commencement for me, because you are a special class to me. We were first-years together! We came here in 2014, and your journey has been my journey, too. And so it is heartwarming and a bit emotional to see you graduate today.

Anyone who knows me well knows that I love musicals. So, it's only natural that as I was reflecting on our four years together I was reminded of the song "For Good" from the musical *Wicked*.

I've heard it said
That people come into our lives
For a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led to those
Who help us most to grow if we let them
And we help them in return

That's what our bond feels like to me. I've watched you learn and grow, and you've helped me grow.

Because I knew you
I have been changed for good.

And what's more, together we've changed Trinity for good. And for the better.

When we started our journey together, at the beginning of the fall semester in 2014, I said these words to you at Convocation:

I challenge you to reach beyond your comfort zone, take classes on subjects that you've never even heard of that help you to analyze a problem from a different perspective, reach out to someone with a background very different from your own, take on a leadership role in an organization or create a new one, and study abroad and learn a new language and culture; take steps to achieve your most ambitious aspirations! If you do, you'll leave Trinity in four years with a broad foundation that will serve you well in the next step of your life, whatever that step may be.

Did you do that? I hope so. I know that many of you did, and you—and Trinity—are better for it.

So what have we done together in these four years on this most excellent adventure?

We have done so much, it's impossible to list everything. Just to name a few: We launched the Bantam Network—created by YOU to help first-year students transition from high school to college life at Trinity. What an extraordinary success we dreamed up together. And it just gets better every year! It is not just the platform for Orientation, it establishes students' connections with the city of Hartford, with each other, and with the fullness of the Trinity experience and all of the opportunities it provides.

Together, we created the Campaign for Community to help us be the change in our community we want to see. This group has led numerous initiatives to build pride, improve campus climate and

culture, and enhance understanding and respectful dialogue across differences. This work is incredibly important for our own campus and for the world that you all will help lead in the future.

And as we treasure our beautiful, historic campus, we have new spaces, too: the Cave in Mather, the Crescent Center for Arts and Neuroscience, the Gruss Music Center, the new athletics fields, and, of course, our new space downtown at Constitution Plaza, home to the Liberal Arts Action Lab.

Along the way, we've celebrated academic honors and athletic championships, and we've realized countless opportunities inside and outside the classroom to put our entrepreneurial spirit and our passion and ingenuity to work.

The challenges we've faced have changed us for good and made us stronger. We've experienced incidents of bias and divisiveness on campus that ended up bringing us closer together as a community.

We've suffered personal loss and tragedy from which we recovered, rebuilt, and fortified our bonds.

And we've seen challenges not of our own making—misperceptions about who we are and what we believe in in higher education. And those challenges led us to redouble our efforts to care for each other and to defend and lift up the value of a liberal arts education.

WE ARE NOT PERFECT. BUT WE ARE A COMMUNITY! And I LOVE this community.

And you have changed me. I wish that I could mention everyone in the class who has touched my life in some way, those whose stories, convictions, kindness, and wisdom have left a lasting impact on me.

I'll just say a little about a few students who do have a very special place in my heart.

Noor Malik: Your story of courage in your journey from Pakistan and your undying optimism and gratitude to Trinity have inspired me.

Denzel Munroe: Your commitment to community and your kindness have inspired me. And you gave me a big warm bear hug every time you saw me, and you don't know how many days I really needed that bear hug!

And James Evans: I call you sunshine because of your bright attitude! I will never forget your match at Harvard for the squash national championship, when you kept your cool under pressure and displayed incredible sportsmanship helping your opponent after a fall. And let's not forget your 66-and-1 college record.

There are so many others I could talk about—Dominique, Justin, Jake, Emily, Michael, Henry, Alicia, Catherine, Mathilde, Rachael, Jamilah—but know that whether I called your name here or not, you have changed me and you have changed Trinity for good.

And remember that wherever you go from here, Trinity will always be here for you, your home. Indulge me with one last quote from "For Good," the song from *Wicked*:

So let me say before we part
So much of me
Is made of what I learned from you
You'll be with me
Like a handprint on my heart
And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have rewritten mine ... my dear friends

And this class, the great Class of 2018, will forever have a handprint on my heart! Because I knew you, WE have been changed for good.

Thank you, and congratulations!