

Brooke MocarSKI LePage

Before I get started, I wanted to note that although my parents and older brother knew I would be speaking today, my four grandparents did not know until this very moment ... surprise, Grandma! But seriously, to all of my friends and family in the audience, you are my heroes, and this one's for you.

Classmates, professors, friends, and family: I am honored to be speaking before you today 'neath these—slightly fewer—sacred elms. I am especially honored to be speaking at this particular Commencement ceremony as it falls during the year that celebrates Trinity's decision to admit women to the college 50 years ago. A few months ago, I had the opportunity to help the college with a video that included interviews with some of the first women to graduate from Trinity. These women were candid about the challenges they faced those first years on campus. Although the college has made significant progress toward gender equity on campus, *sexism still exists today, and progress is still being made.*

This past January, I went to the Women's March in downtown Hartford. The march was populated by different gender identities across all types of groups. Many of these attendees were adorned with T-shirts or signs that read "The Future Is Female." Although I too have this T-shirt, its slogan often troubles me. I dislike sitting around waiting for the future to hopefully one day include women. It is in these moments that I wish my T-shirt read "Make the Present Female." *Rather than a hope or a wish for change, this phrase is a call to action.* It is the mindset that Trinity had when making the decision to go coed and admit women 50 years ago. It is also the mindset that I implore all of my fellow classmates to have upon graduation and in all of their future endeavors. Whether it be on behalf of women or others, it is important to call yourself and your peers to action. This, of course, is one of the many life lessons I will take with me from Trinity.

Another lesson I learned at Trinity was during my time as chapter president of Alpha Chi Omega. Through this role, I learned that my greatest impact was not the meetings I led or the events that we held. Rather, my greatest impact was through the everyday interactions I had with the women in my chapter. This is similar to Green Dot, Trinity's new gender-based violence awareness program. This program empowers the Trinity community to act as "green dots" and have positive and healthy interactions all around campus. I imagine that the trustees had a similar vision when deciding to admit women. Although they made a sweeping decision, it was up to the individuals on the campus to welcome the first women with dignity and respect.

Tomorrow, we will call ourselves Trinity College alumni. This concept used to frighten me, yet it no longer does. Or, rather, I am hoping that soon it no longer will. Our time at Trinity has taught us about ourselves and prepared us for the world beyond it. Since that undeniably hot August day where we sat down at Convocation and received our neatly wrapped nest T-shirts, we have been embarking on a liberal arts journey that has taught us how to see and understand our surroundings with thoughtful consideration and empathy. We continued along this journey when we took our first class in what would become our major, met a professor who would become our biggest advocate, found our niche on campus, studied abroad, and realized that we had made a *lasting impact on this campus and community.* Take all of these lessons that Trinity has taught you, Class of 2019, and use them to start your own call to action. Remember the professors and friends you met, the memories you made late night on Vernon Street—whatever that means to you—and all of the lessons that came with them.

Class of 2019, this is your call to action. This is your call to action to speak a little louder and stand a little taller and take serious consideration in every interaction you have. This is your call to action to be *entrepreneurs, teachers, poets, and financiers* and to realize that you need be an advocate and educator in each one of these roles. This is your call to action to speak for those who cannot always speak for themselves and be brave enough to spark social change like our dear trustees once did.

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