

Welcome everyone, and congratulations to our class of 2025 graduates! It's sunny out and I feel a bit like a petri dish in an incubator, so I will keep this short.

As these four influential years have flown by, I've found myself wondering what it means to mature. For me, adulthood hasn't come in the form of paying bills or how many drinks I put down on my 21st birthday. It's shown up in how I view relationships. The close people in my life are no longer just those I share interests with - they're people I make a conscious effort to connect with emotionally. Few things are more gratifying than reconnecting with an old friend and chatting until 2am, long after you both meant to go to sleep.

Making the effort to maintain these relationships has become a priority in my life, and I see that same effort here when I look around this lawn. It's uplifting to see so many of our friends and family members gathered here to support us, including many who've traveled across the country. That kind of love and dedication is something we should never take for granted.

I am lucky to be surrounded by people who help me be my best self. To the faculty and my fellow colleagues, I want to thank you for your kindness. Shoutout to my best friend and roommate Nick Jones, sitting over there [*point to left side row 3*], for tolerating my antics for four years. To my Mom, who's favorite phrase is "10 years down the road you'll be glad." It hurts to admit, but you were right. Thank you to my dad for responding to my endless questions with "just google it!". You unknowingly raised a strong troubleshooter. To my PI, Dr. Gabriella Lindberg, and my mentor, Dr. Tim Wheeler, thank you for inspiring my scientific passion through a relationship that has been both professional and meaningful. And lastly, shoutout Professors Mark Carrier and Michael Haley for giving us something to bond over in the science library.

I can't wait to see where everyone goes from here. Please stay in touch!
Congrats class of 2025, and sco Ducks!