

**“Striving for Excellence”**  
Colby-Sawyer College 2015 Commencement  
Senior Address by Krista Peace

Good morning members of the Board, President Galligan, faculty, staff, distinguished guests, families, friends, and the graduating Class of 2015,

Four years ago, members of our class made a commitment. For some, the decision was easy and obvious, for others it was more challenging- sort of like getting married. We had dated around, we'd been courted by other schools, we weighed the pros and cons of what they all had to offer, and ultimately, we decided to commit to Colby-Sawyer. With that came the paperwork. We flipped through form after form the same way that we scroll through the Apple terms and conditions license agreement: with a blind faith that someone else is paying attention to what exactly it is we are agreeing to. Buried in all of that paperwork, though, was an expectation and a promise. Professor Boyer likes to call this paperwork, “academic pre-nups.” We signed our names and with that we acknowledged what would be expected of us in this relationship in order to meet the required benchmarks and receive our diplomas. We shrugged it off because, at the time, this day seemed impossibly far away, yet here we are. Along with their expectation of us, we were told what we could expect from them. We were promised that at Colby-Sawyer College, “Faculty, staff, and students strive for *excellence* in the college’s engaged teaching and learning community to foster students’ academic, intellectual, and personal growth.” Now that our undergraduate collegiate career has come to a close, it is time to reflect on our time here, and that first promise seems like the appropriate benchmark by which, we, the Class of 2015, should assess our experience at Colby-Sawyer.

Colby-Sawyer strives for *excellence*, but what exactly does that mean? Being the undeniably huge nerd that I am, I consulted Aristotle to find what I believe to be the best definition of excellence. An interpretation of Aristotle’s work tells us that, “We are what we repeatedly do. *Excellence*, then, is not an act, but a habit.” If this is true, and I believe it to be so, what does that mean for this community, and for this class? What do we do repeatedly, and does it make us *excellent*?

After four years here, the Class of 2015 has developed many habits. Whether it’s what we’re going to do on the weekends, chicken nugget days, or, in the case of this semester, never having classes on Mondays because of the ongoing snowpocalypse, we have established a routine. Now, *some* might argue that, despite our un-fluctuating enthusiasm, having chicken nugget days doesn’t exactly make us *excellent*, this is still up for debate. For the sake of argument, though, I will reflect upon some of our other habits that more closely approximate Aristotle’s definition.

Our college is a community of passionate intellectuals whose curiosity and drive are illustrated by our routine actions. We are students who repeatedly think and apply our education outside of the confines of the classroom. Members of our class have completed internships in legal offices, on sports fields, in schools, on farms, on boats, in hospitals, in banks, with politicians, and so much more. Many of our graduating business students used their knowledge gained in the classroom to help establish our very own brewpub on campus. This spring, some of our students were busy creating the second batch of Colby-Sawyer beer – the Capstone Rye – while others were tapping the trees around campus to make our maple syrup. Creative vision and subsequent accomplishments like these in and out of the classroom are second nature here at Colby-Sawyer.

We are a community of generous and responsible citizens. Within hours of the devastating earthquake in Nepal last month, members of the Colby-Sawyer community rallied to organize and host a successful fundraiser to benefit those affected. This fall, many members of the Class of 2015 engaged in New Hampshire and national politics and performed their civic responsibility by walking across the street to vote on Election Day. Every year, members of the Class of 2015 have participated in Colby-Sawyer's Alternative Spring Break, dedicating their energy and free time to community service. Nursing students have repeatedly woken up at unspeakable hours to get to their clinicals. I never had to wake up hours before class to see the crazy beautiful New London sunrises because I knew I could count on the nursing students to post pictures on Instagram for the rest of us to see when we woke up. Thank you for that, by the way. They've also spent their time administering flu shots right here on campus to help prevent the effects of living in the petri dish that college campuses inevitably become during flu season. Athletic teams have spent their afternoons and weekends cleaning up our campus and working with young athletes to inspire and excite them for their future. Environmentally passionate students have gone out of their way to mobilize the movement to make our campus more sustainable and responsible by bringing local food options to the dining hall and the lodge and by working on initiatives to decrease our campus's carbon footprint. The college's goal is to be carbon neutral by 2050. I hope we all come back long before then to see this growth and progress.

We are a community that celebrates diversity. In the Class of 2015, we have students from across the United States and throughout the world. For such a small community in rural New Hampshire this is impressive, but it is even more impressive how much our community does to, not only embrace but also, learn about, highlight, and incorporate each culture represented on our campus into our lives here.

I could stand up here for hours listing the accomplishments and merits of each of the members of the Class of 2015 and this community because there truly is no shortage of examples. There are not just a handful of isolated instances of prominence in this community. *Excellence is not an act, but a habit.* The culmination of our habits results in a community that strives for, and achieves, excellence every single day. This shines from every facet of our college, and the Class

of 2015 has repeatedly, habitually, been a brilliant representation of what it means to be a Charger.

As of today, our role in this community and in the world shifts. Members of the Class of 2015, take time today to reflect upon and be proud of the excellence that we have achieved and been a part of here. Appreciate the fact that examples of excellence have not been a surprise to us because we are part of a community where excellence is simply a habit. Most importantly, remember to maintain these habits as we begin the next chapters of our lives in the, “dynamic, diverse, and independent world” that we have spent the last four years at Colby-Sawyer preparing to thrive in.

Congratulations to the Colby-Sawyer College Class of 2015!