

Commencement
May 27, 2017
Spartan Stadium

Thank you, Dr. Feinstein!

Hello, Class of 2017!

Well ... you've made it!

On behalf of San José State University and Spartan Nation, I want to welcome you, your families and friends, our faculty and staff and other guests to our 2017 commencement ceremony.

I am excited--as this is my first opportunity to celebrate commencement as your president--but know my own emotions cannot possibly match yours.

Graduates: this is **your** day. And after years of hard work and sacrifice, you most certainly have earned it!

The platform party seated behind me is here to honor and celebrate your accomplishments. I would like to introduce them, ask that they stand when their name is called, and remain standing until all have been introduced, at which point we can give them a warm Spartan welcome. Please hold your applause until all have been introduced.

- Alumna, award-winning television news journalist, CEO of Latinas Contra Cancer, and today's Commencement Keynote Speaker, **Ysabel** (IS-A-BEL) **Duron** (DU - RON).
- Alumnus, business leader, philanthropist, Tower Foundation Board member and Honorary Doctoral Degree Recipient, **Phil Boyce**.
- California State University Trustee, **Steven Stepanek**.
- California State University Trustee, **Larry Norton** '67 MA History.
- California State University Executive Vice Chancellor and General Counsel, **Framroze** (FRAM - ROSE) **Virjee** (VIR - JEE)

- Faculty member **Christopher Cox**, recipient of this year's San José State Outstanding Lecturer Award.
- Professor **Persis Karim**, recipient of San José State's Outstanding Professor Award.
- Professor **Brian Belet** (BE - LAY), recipient of San José State's President's Scholar Award.
- Outstanding Graduating Seniors Award winners **Fatema Elbakoury** and **Lauren Cordova**.
- Outstanding Thesis Award winners **Mary Okin** and **Paul Zimmer**.
- San José State University Academic Senate Chair **Michael Kimbarow**.
- Associated Students President **Hector Perea, Jr.**, who is graduating today with a bachelor of science in Business Administration with a focus on global operations management.
- San José State University Alumni Association President **Coleetta McElroy**.
- **Professor Nancie Fimbel**, President of the Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association.
- **Andy Feinstein**, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- **Reggie Blaylock**, Vice President for Student Affairs.
- **Walter Jacobs**, Dean of the College of Social Sciences.
- **Mary Schutten**, Dean of the College of Applied Sciences and Arts.
- **Paul Cascella**, Interim Dean of the Connie L. Lurie College of Education.
- **Michael Parrish**, Dean of the College of Science.
- **Dan Moshavi**, Dean of the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business.
- **Ping Hsu**, Interim Dean of the Charles W. Davidson College of Engineering.

- **Lisa Vollendorf**, Dean of the College of Humanities and the Arts.
- **Thalia Anagnos**, Associate Vice President, Graduate and Undergraduate Programs.
- **David Bruck**, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies.
- **Shaina Levin**, who beautifully performed our National Anthem – thank you, Shaina! She is graduating today with a Masters of Arts in Music/vocal performance.

I also would like to acknowledge Professor **Lui Lam**, recipient of San José State's Distinguished Service Award, who would have been part of the platform party but was unable to attend.

And I would like to welcome our own 27th District State Assemblymember Ash Kalra, who is viewing the ceremony from the guest suites.

Now, everyone, let's welcome our distinguished platform party!

Thank you. Platform party, you may now be seated.

Graduates, families and friends: commencement is not just an opportunity to dress up in robes--although our grads all look marvelous, don't they?

I truly consider this the most important and *sacred* day of the academic year. It is the moment that officially affirms the completion of a milestone that forever will impact your lives, and the lives of future generations.

That is true for the 6,691 recipients of baccalaureate degrees; the 3,100 graduates being awarded Master's degrees; and the 23 doctoral degree recipients.

In all, San José State is granting a record-breaking 9,791 degrees. Yes, nearly ten thousand in all.

Graduates: you not only are celebrating an individual milestone. You also are part of the largest cohort of graduates in the history of this 160-year old institution--the oldest public university in the West.

That, too, is something to celebrate!

(Brief pause)...I would ask that we recognize members of the United States armed forces, both at home and abroad. Some likely are watching this ceremony right now on our live webcast. To all of them, please know that you are with us, you have our full support, and we look forward to your safe return home to your families and friends.

I would like officially to recognize the seven second lieutenants being commissioned in the Air Force today, having completed the requirements of the ROTC program. Would you please stand and allow us to thank you?

On a sadder note, **nine** of our students passed away this academic year. **Five** would have been members of the Class of 2017, and the University has approved the conferring of their degrees posthumously:

Mr. Omar Peraza was very close to completing the requirements for a bachelor of arts in Biology and was to graduate today. It is an honor for me officially to confer his degree, posthumously.

Taowu Wen was very close to completing the requirements for a master of science in Electrical Engineering. It is an honor for me to officially confer his degree, posthumously.

Karlos de la Torre also was very close to completing the requirements for a bachelor of arts in Television, Radio, Film and Theatre and was to graduate today. It is an honor for me officially to confer his degree, posthumously.

Melanie Tang was very close to completing the requirements for a bachelor of science in Business Administration with a concentration in Management Information Systems. It is an honor for me officially to confer her degree, posthumously.

Ms. Catherine Hyun Jung Yi also was expected to complete the requirements for a Master of Science in Biology and was to graduate today. Her family is with us today to recognize her achievement. It is an honor for me officially to confer the Master of Science in Biology degree to Catherine Hyun Jung Yi posthumously and have my Chief of Staff present her degree to her family members, who are sitting in one of the sky suites.

We offer again our deep condolences to these students' parents and family members. I would like now to ask everyone to please stand and join us in observing a moment of silence in honor of these students.

Thank you.

You will hear a bit later from a very inspiring commencement speaker, so I intentionally will keep my remarks brief. But I do want to leave our graduates and all celebrants with just one or two departing thoughts.

First, I'd like you to reflect for just a moment on how much the world has changed since you arrived here to begin your studies.

For today, let's leave global and national politics aside. Consider just the impact that technology--much of it discovered, refined and deployed right here, in our Silicon Valley backyard--has had on our lives.

One example: 130 years ago, "Watson" was a Sherlock Holmes character in the fertile literary mind of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Six years ago, "Watson"--an artificial intelligence asset from the IBM research lab--mastered the television game show, *Jeopardy*.

And today, *that* "Watson" is helping cure cancer.

Most of you--especially our undergraduates who have been here since your freshman year--were only beginning to rely on ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft.

Today, can we imagine life without them?

My point, very simply, is that your lives will change in ways that you can't yet imagine. And your San Jose State degree, and the critical thinking skills you've gained from a caring, devoted faculty, will help you navigate that 24/7, ever-changing, unimaginably fast-moving world.

Speaking of faculty: some of them are with us today to celebrate with you. Graduates, how about giving *them* a Spartan thank you?

It is not just the world that's changed during your time here. Your university has changed, too. For the better.

In about an hour, this will be your *alma mater*. And there are plenty of reasons to be proud. Very recently, San Jose State was ranked among the top universities in the country for fostering the upward social and economic mobility of its students.

We continue to be the go-to source of talent in Silicon Valley. If you're carrying an iPhone, remember: Apple employs more Spartans than it does graduates of any other college or university--period.

And San Jose State consistently ranks among the nation's top universities for long-term economic "rate of return" for those earning degrees here.

This isn't a sleepy commuter campus any more. It is a rising, thriving engine of innovation and a critical asset to our city, our region, our state, our nation, and our world!

You know, the California State University began here. We are its founding campus. And later this morning, you will join Spartan Nation, 260,000 living Spartan alumni from all walks of life, making a difference in all corners of the world.

Trust me on this: you will bump into fellow Spartans everywhere you turn. Whether it's your next job, your next school, your child's school, your neighbor, or your church, mosque or synagogue.

You can take tremendous pride in what you've accomplished. I hope you'll be just as proud of your alma mater.

Speaking of pride: **no one** is prouder of you than your families and friends. I'd like to be sure that we take a moment to recognize them.

- Will all parents and guardians of graduates, please stand (and stay standing).
- Will grandparents of graduates please stand.
- Will spouses and partners of graduates please stand!
- Siblings of graduates, will you stand?
- Children and grandchildren of graduates, please stand!
- And finally, friends and guests of today's graduates, please stand!

OK graduates, it's *your* turn. I'd like you to join me in standing and thanking those who have supported you on your academic journey! Give them a Spartan ovation!

Thank you. That was really nice!

Every graduate has a compelling story. These stories of grit, determination and perseverance are what make us Spartans.

I thought one graduate's story deserved special mention. In 1973, Jesse (JESS) Musquez (MUSS-KEZZ) was completing his final requirements for a bachelor's degree in mathematics. A Vietnam veteran, Jesse had attended San Jose State on the GI Bill while working full-time to support his wife and two children--*with a third on the way*.

Then, the death of his sister-in-law intervened. His career, and supporting an extended family including three small children, became his priorities. He never got the chance to walk with his graduating class.

At the urging of family--several of whom studied or work here--Jesse Musquez decided that the time finally had come to celebrate his degree, and to make the same walk into this stadium that countless Spartans have made before him.

Here's what his daughter, Anna (AH - NA) Martorana (MAR - TO - RANA), told us: *"My father is an example of the American dream."*

We agree. Jesse proudly made that walk this morning, with his adoring family cheering from the press box. Let's give a warm Spartan ovation to mathematics degree recipient from the Class of 1973, Mr. Jesse Musquez! Jesse, will you stand?

I cannot imagine a better way to conclude my remarks than with such a wonderful story. Jesse, congratulations to you and to your family. You embody what it means to be a Spartan.

Graduates, I always will remember you--the first class at San Jose State on which I was blessed with the opportunity formally to confer degrees. On behalf of the entire San Jose State community--congratulations!