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SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY STUDENT COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

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Good morning everyone!

I am humbled to stand before you and honored to address you on a day like today. I am privileged to be here, right here, and say just a few things I think I've learned along the way. The first being our responsibility to reflect on where we've been. To look back

on our time at SUU with fondness, all the while showing the appreciation and gratitude deserved by the ones who have paved the way, deserved by our loved ones: those who could and couldn't make it here today. For although it is our names scribed on the diplomas, although it is our hands to be shaken, although SUU is soon to be our alma mater, we would surely be mistaken to believe a single person could be responsible for any single success. This achievement is far from just our own. This beast could not have been conquered by ourselves alone. This victory of ours belongs to our supporters just as well. It belongs to our parents, our professors, our guardian angels. Don't ever think we *forgot*. It belongs to our family, our friends, and our defenders too. So, congratulations Class of 2019.

Congratulations whether you're in a cap and gown or not.

It's on days like today that we get a full and complete picture and realize the magnitude of such an accomplishment. We better understand the gravity of what has been done. It is this magnitude and this gravity that makes a day like today mean something to someone. You see, days like today are uncommon. They're uncommon in the dress, in the company, and in the formality. But most notably, they're uncommon in the task. A

celebration of a kind of abnormality. Not everyone has done what we've just done. Not everyone has prospered in the way we've just prospered. Should we allow, it is this uncommon behavior, this uncommon way of thinking that will take us even farther.

Please understand that none of us were meant to be common. We were born to be comets. It is not our place to be trivial or trite. For, *our* place, Class of 2019, *our* place is among the triumphant. So, do not be afraid to walk alone. Do not be afraid to go where others simply will not go. At no time should you allow phobia, or dread, or being trapped in your own head to hold you back. Fear disappears dreams just like *that *snap**. It's the same doubt and worry that too often divides our people and our families. So, let us take a pledge to never swallow, but squander such poison **raise right hand**. Repeat after me, "Watch us fly!"

For it's actually far more dangerous for planes to stay on the ground. I know how crazy this must sound. But what most people don't know is that on the ground a plane begins to rust, malfunction, and wear much faster than it ever would if it was in the air. Planes were built to live in the skies, just as you and I were built to shake up the tides, filled with pride, unified, side-by-side, our tenacity magnified. So, it is perhaps the saddest **loss** to live a life on the ground without ever taking off. Down to this earth we shall not be bound. And, sometimes, sometimes you've got to leap and grow your wings on the way down.

Are you willing, I ask, to do the things today that others won't do, in order to have the things tomorrow that others won't have? Are you bold enough to be better than average? Are you wise enough to build your own bridge to get to the other side? I ask you to dig beneath the most convenient answer. Convenience is a cancer. Find a cure. Find the will to do what is uncommon, even when others are unsure. You see, you and me, and she and we, and us and him, and they and them, and can you even begin to imagine what we could do? We could find ourselves among the very few. Someone is going to make extraordinary use of their time on this Earth. It might as well be you.

No one sets out to live a mediocre life. No one desires to be the unexceptional type. It is under the weight of social obligations, others' expectations that the conformist, conventional path is uncovered. And we get to choose. Stay on the ground and rust, or take

that remarkable leap? And trust me, you are more than capable of doing either. So, what will be the choice for you?

It is not difficult, nor worthwhile, to list the ingredients of the common life. We see it often. It's on days like today that we decide to go further than what others might suggest. To do even just a little more in order to surpass the rest. To be better tomorrow than what, today, we might consider our very best. *This* is what has gotten us here.

Here's to all that's been done thus far; for every time you shot and were, or maybe weren't, able to land among those stars. I hope you agree it was worth your while and remain dedicated and steadfast even in the face of your trials and tribulations. There are many to overcome. But I know *you*, Thunderbird, and *you* will eventually come out having fought and won. I hope you accept this encouragement to continue to go about your uncommon ways, and in doing so, you'll begin to notice that you'll have more and more days like today.

Thank you and congratulations Class of 2019!