

Undergraduate Commencement  
May 18, 2018

Thanks Mindy.

Hmmm, I think Bridgeport needs to know that Southern is in the house.  
SC-SU, SC-SU.....

So last year, you may have heard that I sang to the graduating class.  
How could I not try it again this year. So I asked some of your  
classmates for song suggestions. I received several recommendations  
for songs from – Post Mallone, Cardi B, Kendrick Lamar, Beyonce', Ed  
Sheeran, Drake, Taylor Swift, SZA, and a DJ named Marshmello.

Since I'm old and don't know who any of these people really are, I've  
decided to take a more traditional route...a tune from American  
Authors...Hope you'll help me out.

*You had a dream so big and loud  
You jumped so high you touched the clouds*

*Here we go: Wo-o-o-o-o-oh [x2]*

*You stretched your hands out to the sky  
You danced with monsters through the night*

*Wo-o-o-o-o-oh [x2]*

*You're never gonna look back  
Whoa, you're never gonna give it up  
No, please don't wake us now*

*Oo-o-o-o-o*

*This is gonna be the best day of your life  
your li-i-i-ife*

*Oo-o-o-o-o*

*This is gonna be the best day of your life  
Your li-i-i-ife*

*Boom!*

Welcome members of the Class of 2018! And welcome to all of your family members, friends and significant others!

You will likely have other “best days” as you move through life -- but commencement day, it’s right up there.

You can be justifiably proud of what you’ve accomplished. In many ways, I feel that earning a degree from Southern holds a special resonance, because our students truly have to strive and sacrifice to get there.

I received a letter recently from one of your classmates, Kevin Arita -- are you out there Kevin? -- which I feel sums up the transformational Southern experience.

Kevin wrote: "Southern has allowed me to pursue my dream of obtaining my degree and be the first, much like hundreds of my graduating class, of my generation to graduate college.

"I never thought I could do this. There were so many things I failed in, so many doubters, so many things went wrong my way for a long time. However, these obstacles that I've overcome has made me a better person for my class, my job, my mother, my family, and my son."

Kevin -- you did it! And did you get shirt I sent you? I hope it was the right size!

I want to give a quick shout out to a couple of other members of your class that I got to know well:

- Alan-Michael Ziegler, exercise science major who helped me lose 20 pounds this semester as my personal trainer.

- Bahar Musa, headed for graduate school at Southern and the wonderful teaching assistant in my INQ leadership class.
- Aaron Tejada, and Josh Cortez, whose twin brother attends Lyndon State College in Vermont, home of my last presidency.
- And a big shout out to all of you who ate with me in the dining hall, followed my Friday Snapchat takeovers, tie-dyed me for charity and followed my wayward parking directions during my cameo as a campus police officer.

One of the great things I love about this class is its exuberance and its passion -- and I hope you take all that good energy with you as you leave us today.

While we'll certainly miss you when you're gone, I know that Southern has prepared you well to achieve happiness, joy and success.

And, we've prepared you to be resilient -- to make it through the uncertainty and the challenges that are sure to come.

When those challenges do arrive, remember that you are surrounded by people in your life who care about you and who love you -- many of

them the same people who helped you get to this milestone today. Let's give all those people a round of applause!

So as you leave us, take their example and care about others when you get out into the world: in the spirit of social justice, be compassionate, generous and intentionally kind.

Always remember that people, not things, matter.

The degree you will receive today is a great gift -- and there are millions of people here in America and across the globe who would do anything to stand in your shoes.

So as you leave us today with your well-earned diplomas, I challenge each and every one of you to use this gift wisely, generously and well, throughout your long, happy and productive lives.

Before I close, as I always do, with a short story, I'd like to give you, our graduates, the opportunity to thank one more group of people – our FACULTY.

Through their guidance, their mentorship, their teaching, they have made a tremendous contribution to your being where you are today and left you well prepared to face your future.

I ask that you please stand and join in recognizing the faculty of Southern Connecticut State University.

And now, as your alma mater says good-bye, I would like to leave you with a short story...

The parents of two twins visit with a doctor expressing concern that one child is an extreme pessimist, while the other is an extreme optimist. Confidently, the doctor reassures the parents that the problem can be easily resolved.

With that, the doctor takes the pessimist and places the child in a room filled with brand new toys. "These toys are all yours to play with and have fun," says the doctor. The doctor then leaves the room and locks the door.

The doctor then takes the second twin, the optimist, and places the child in a room filled with manure. Again, the doctor leaves the room and locks the door.

About an hour later, the doctor returns to the first room, where the pessimist resides with the brand new toys. Upon opening the door the doctor sees the child sitting on the floor crying, toys untouched.

The doctor says, “what’s the problem, why didn’t you play with the toys?” The pessimistic child replies, “if I played with the toys, I would have broken them and gotten in trouble.”

Shaking their head in disbelief, the doctor walks down the hall to where the optimist resides in the room filled with manure. Upon opening the door, the child is nowhere to be found. Suddenly, the child’s head pops out of the pile of manure.

The doctor, stunned asks, “What are you doing?” At which the child replied, “Well, if there’s manure in here, there’s gotta be a pony in here somewhere!”

And so, class of 2018...the moral of the story - no matter what life throws your way, always “LOOK FOR THE PONY!”

Congratulations!