Good afternoon President Mirenda, Trustees, Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia, faculty and administration, distinguished guests, families, friends and fellow graduates. I am highly honored to be given the opportunity to deliver this address on this very special occasion. To begin, I would like to congratulate my fellow classmates on reaching this major milestone.

As I sat down to write this speech I thought about what I should say, and who I should thank. There are several people to whom I owe many personal “thank yous” and I am certain that you know who you are. But I also realized that all of us here have many people to thank.

Rather than mention by name the wonderful individuals who so affected and influenced me personally, I would like to thank some other very important people and groups on behalf of the graduating class of 2014 as a whole.

First, I would like to thank President Mirenda and Dr. O’Sullivan for caring so deeply about the students here at Neumann and creating such a uniquely personal environment for us throughout our University careers.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff here at Neumann University. Without your investment in each and every student's education, we would not be standing here today. As an education major and prospective teacher, my professors in the education program fostered in all of us a love of learning, commitment to being a lifelong learner, and dedication to respect for all humankind. These principles derive Neumann’s core values: Reverence, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Stewardship, known to us by the acronym RISES. Neumann University’s core values are the great gifts we leave this campus with today, and the values which will guide us as we pursue our dreams and careers.

And perhaps the most important thank you of all goes out to our parents, families, and friends. I think my fellow graduates will agree with me when I say that this moment would not have been possible without the strong support systems our parents, families, and friends have provided. For that, we are eternally grateful.

Over the past few weeks leading up to this day I have had the opportunity to reflect on what Neumann has meant to me, and about what comes next. I also found myself thinking about time. Time flies by, and there never seems to be enough of it. I thought about how life often comes at us so fast that we do not always have an opportunity to appreciate the time we have, and the people with whom we share this precious gift. It feels like only yesterday that I was driving up that hill for the very first time for freshmen orientation and my first college class with a nervous, yet excited, feeling in my stomach. It was immediately evident that Neumann was the right place for me, and I’m sure you all felt the same way.

Neumann has offered so many great things to us to help make our collective journey toward our dreams more memorable and rich such as trips to New York, Spring Formals, simple commuter lunches, transportation accommodations -- and the list goes on and on. Our class is among the first
classes to graduate from Neumann University, rather than Neumann College, and one of the first to make use of The Mirenda Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development, named for our remarkable President and her equally remarkable husband, University Ambassador Anthony Mirenda.

Our graduating education majors were the first to complete the new dual certification program, making us more marketable in the job search, and more invaluable to our future students. Our varsity teams and clubs made Neumann proud by winning championships and representing our University as respectable and mature student athletes. Our student clubs and Student Government Association offered us events and programs that strengthened our community and enriched the Neumann experience, such as Color Walk and numerous community-based service opportunities. Some of us studied abroad, or helped rebuild homes in Camden or New Orleans.

And now we stand here proudly and ready to take the final step in our college careers. Our hard work, long hours of study, and seemingly unceasing stress finally paid off as our dreams today become a reality. We will leave Neumann with many accomplishments of which we should be proud, new and lasting knowledge, unforgettable experiences, and friendships which will last a lifetime. The memory of our time here at Neumann University will be forever etched upon our hearts.

In closing, I’d like to quote the beloved Dr. Seuss, who said: “You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You’re on your own, and you know what you know. You are the guy who’ll decide where to go.”

And finally (I promise) my best wishes go out to all of the graduates sitting in front of me, with whom I have shared so many fond memories. I hope that as we end this chapter in our lives we are also ready to begin a new one. I wish you all the best. Good luck, God Bless, and Congratulations, Class of 2014

Thank you