

2019 Commencement Address – Dr. Arthur Lupia

SCGSSM Commencement

I. GRATITUDE

Senator Malloy, Dr. Flores, GSSM Faculty, Staff, and Students. Thank you for having me here today. I am grateful for the kindness that you have shown to me. I am charmed by this lovely community and absolutely blown away by this school. This is an incredible place.

To all of the parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, mentors, and friends who are here today, thank you.

Thank you, families for all of the support that you have given these students. The young adults that you have sent to this school are so inspiring. Thank you for building the foundations of that inspiration.

Thanks too for the support you gave your students on the inevitable down days that all of us have. Thank you for the phone calls when things weren't going so well. Thank you for the unexpected care packages.

Everyone in attendance today is to be celebrated. Their accomplishments are your accomplishments. Congratulations to all.

II. WELCOME TO THE TEAM

While on the topic of gratitude, I want to thank all of you here for devoting hours, days, years, and in some cases lifetimes, to science. Science is an amazing thing. It is a way to learn. It is a way to discover. And, most importantly science is service.

What an incredible service it is. Today, science and mathematics are vital to the well-being of every factory, every farm and every family in America. Science is improving the ways that we educate our children, care for our elders, and support our servicemen and women.

Those improvements don't come easy. Science is hard work. It challenges us. Our graduates have done such a good job of managing those challenges.

Graduates, I know that in your first days at this school, some of you were a little intimidated. Many of you wondered, "Do I really belong here?" and "Do I fit in?"

And, along the way, a number of you realized something very important about the answer to the question "Do I fit in?" You learned that an education at this school is not about "fitting in."

An education at this school is about "standing out." You're outstanding. You truly stand out.

Every teacher here has seen how hard you work. They knew you were smart. But what they saw in your time here is your willingness to learn. And that matters. Because it takes more than smarts to succeed in science. You need perseverance. Because if you're ambitious in science, you speed past the easy problems and go for the hard ones. The hard problems take more work. Perseverance matters – and you have it.

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Science also requires teamwork. Sometimes when a science problem is just a little bigger than you are, it can help to take a step away from, try to look at it in a different way, and then describe what you see to someone else. So, many great discoveries come from scientists working together.

If you want to discover great things, you have to be part of a great team. At the National Science Foundation, we support great scientific teams in all 50 states. We supported the worldwide scientific team that recently produced the first image of a black hole.

Teamwork is a critical part of everything we do at NSF. For example, our Director, France Cordova, is an astrophysicist and used to be the Chief Scientist at NASA. She has brought to NSF a concept called “the Big Ideas.” A big idea is one where you need all of science from math to chemistry to biology to physics to psychology to economics to computer science to engineering to work together as a team to make progress on the biggest challenges facing science and society.

At NSF, we know that great science needs great teams. And we are so proud of all of you for your dedication to making science better. On behalf of the National Science Foundation, I would like to say to all of you who are graduating today, “Thank you for your interest in science and “Welcome to our team.””

IV. A FEW REQUESTS

Now that we have thanked everyone, and we have welcomed you to the NSF science team, there is one more thing I would like to do. I have five small requests of you, the graduating class.

*First, When you walk across this stage in a few minutes, walk slowly. Embrace the moment. Make it worthy of everything that you have done to get here. Take it *all* in. Please, walk slowly if you can. Because you deserve the time on this stage. You earned it. Take it in. Walk slowly.*

Second, show gratitude. Walking slowly gives you an opportunity to do this. If a member of the staff or a teacher has been very helpful to you, make eye contact with them when you are doing your slow walk. You’ll feel great about it, and they will too.

Third, find friends and family. As you walk across this stage, look out into the audience. See if you can find friends and family. Acknowledge them. This is their moment too. Let them savor it. Share your moment with the people who helped you along the way.

Fourth, don’t worry about falling. I know that people are nervous about this. Particularly if you are wearing heels...As you can see, I left mine at home today.

But there’s a bigger reason not to worry about falling. Because if you fall, you’re going to do the thing that govies do – *you’re going to get back up*. That’s what we do in science. We know that we’re going to face tough days. And when the subject that we’re studying knocks us down a bit, we work hard, we persevere, we work with our teammates, and we get back up.

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Because at this amazing school, You don't fit in. You stand out. And when you fall. You persevere, You work as a team, and You get back up.

Fifth, and finally, realize that soon after you leave the stage, you will walk out those doors. And you're not going to believe what is out there. There are people who need you.

Families need your skills. Communities need your skills. Businesses need your skills. People of faith need your skills. Our military needs your skills. The people around you need your skills and people whose circumstances we can barely imagine need your skills.

All of us, we share a planet, we share a destiny, and *we need every one of you* to use your skills to make this world a better place.

So, let's celebrate that today. Thank you for supporting this graduating class and thank you for supporting this amazing school.