

Good morning!

I am Hector Flores, President of the South Carolina School for Science and Mathematics and it is my honor and privilege to welcome you to the commencement ceremony for the GSSM class of 2018. Graduates, congratulations!

Before we proceed, let us all take a moment of silence to give thanks to what who or what we may believe in, and to those loved ones who are unable to be here today or no longer among us. Let us bow for a moment.

Thank you!

First and foremost, this is a celebration. A celebration of our senior class, their individual and collective accomplishments, their journey at GSSM, the promise of a wonderful life journey, their goodness, and the growth they experienced at GSSM, in both intellect and in character.

While the celebration is recognition of your individual selves, it is also a celebration of the many people who have supported you through these two years at GSSM and even before coming to GSSM.

Will the graduates' loved ones, parents, sibling, relatives, friends, friends of friends, all stand up and be recognized for all you have done for our graduates?

Thank you!

As a community of teachers and learners, it has been our honor to serve the students during their time at GSSM. We thank you for the privilege of being their home away from home, their community away from community. Will the faculty, staff, administrators at GSSM please stand and be recognized!

Let me also acknowledge the superb support staff at GSSM who are not here at the ceremony, but working hard at the school to get ready for the reception following the ceremony and to support checking out,

moving out, and other logistics for our graduating seniors. Thank you,
GSSM support staff!

Acknowledge guest, Gerald Malloy, Joe Griffin, other members of the
board and foundation board, members of our wonderful City of
Hartsville, Dr. Tracy Parkinson from Coker College, etc. DOUBLE
CHECK!

As appropriate for a Governor's School, we invited the Governor of the
State of South Carolina, the Honorable Henry McMaster, to attend.

Because of scheduling issues, Governor McMasters are unable to join us
today, but he sends a letter to the graduates, which reads as follows:

Hector's closing remarks:

Before we conclude this ceremony, let me remind everyone that you are
ALL invited to a reception in our campus, at the dining hall, in honor of
our graduates.

As we conclude this event, let me share some reflections and thoughts with you. Graduates, you have been challenged in ways, you probably did not expect, and also probably well beyond what you might have expected. In the process, through this journey, you have grown enormously, in both character and intellect, in ways that may not be immediately apparent. You will now go out into a world that is both wonderful and uncertain, full of promise, as life always is, and full of challenges, as life always is. The world will continue to change, and we, you, will continue to change with it and hopefully HELP change it. For the better. That will be the ultimate measure of your growth.

On a personal note, I came to this country, first, to pursue further education, and later became a citizen, like many of us, in the belief that at its foundation, at its core, it is like no other country in the world. In the current climate of division, which gets amplified through social media and through technology and ways we could not ever imagine, it is easy to get involved in the cycle of apparent and real division, between the haves and the have not's, the educated and the not so, the powerful and the powerless, the privileged and the destitute. The danger of engaging in just this cycle, while being fully aware that our challenges

are fully real, is that we tend to forget the core values on which this country, and thus this state has evolved. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is not an empty phrase, it is a full promise, it expresses the deep hope that we can, will make, things better, for all of us, if we can nurture our better wolves while keeping the bad wolves at bay. As you go out to meet this world, its perils and its sense of possibility, please know that whatever you accomplish will be a function of how you grow a better self, but also the result of how you share your better selves with others. This is the sense of common good and common achievement that the founding fathers, I believe, had in mind when they wrote this unique phrase.

Graduates, I bid you farewell for now, please stay in touch, hoping to say many of you very soon, as we get ready to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first GSSM graduating class in 2019. Thank you and good luck!