

Helen He: "Arms Open to the Future"

Good evening distinguished guests, teachers, families, friends, and my fellow classmates of the Class of 2019.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Helen He, and we went to high school together. First off, I would like to sincerely congratulate everyone for being here today. In the face of all the challenges of high school and the dangers in the world, we have made it!

It is my honor to share a few thoughts with you before this chapter of our lives comes to a close and we walk through these doors into endless opportunities awaiting further down the road. We were always told that those four years of high school would fly by quickly, and indeed they did. It seems like only yesterday that all of us were freshmen, nervously strolling through the hallways with butterflies in our stomachs and now here we are today, at our graduation ceremony with all of our classmates for one last time. I am truly thankful for these past four years which have been a wonderful combination of laughter, tears, fun, stress and most importantly, individual growth.

Henry David Thoreau put it best when he said, "You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one." None of us are the same after these four years. We began high school as teenagers, who thought they had figured out the world already, and now we will leave as adults, with maturity and a better understanding of the world around us. These four years of growth have prepared us for much of what the future has to offer. We have not only

learned the power of communication, the importance of collaboration and the meaning of compromise, but we have also learned to race to buy coffee before the line at Dunkin' is too long. However, we still have much to see and much to experience in the world outside, and I encourage everyone to embrace the future with arms wide open and hands outstretched. Keep in mind that the opportunity to achieve success IS within our reach, but we ourselves must take action to hold onto it. While we do not always know where we will end up, we must remember that our futures are like clay: **that we shape and mold ourselves!**

High school may be coming to an end for us but the memories and friendships that we have formed during our time here will be what we remember for years to come. Years from now, we may not remember that the derivative of $\sin x$ is $\cos x$ (sorry, Mr. Fisher)...but we will remember our teachers whose thoughtful advice helped shape us, not only as students but also as people. And we will remember our friends, who we have met through the wonderful sports and clubs offered at Pilgrim High School! These are the friends who always help us up when we fall and who never fail to bring smiles to our faces each and every day.

I would like to take this moment to thank the people who helped me get to where I am today. Thank you to my amazing friends for sticking with me through thick and thin, and giving me beautiful memories to treasure forever. **YOU GUYS ARE AWESOME!** Thank you to my wonderful teachers for all they have taught me, about both school and life, over these past four years. Thank you to our principal, Mr. Habershaw and the school faculty for making our high school experience one to remember. Thank you to my brother, Dan for always being my

cheerleader and my best friend. At last but not least, thank you to my parents, who have taught me the true meaning of hard work and sacrifice and have unconditionally supported me ever since day one. I love you, Mom and Dad!

Now, I realize that our hearts are all jumping out of our chests, and we are all waiting to walk across the stage, so I will leave you with one piece of advice. Former President Barack Obama once said, "**We did not come to fear the future. We came here to shape it.**" I believe that because we are all sculptors of our own futures. So tonight, as you walk through these doors regardless of where you plan to be after graduation: be it in college, the military, in a trade-study program or working, remember to **embrace the future with arms wide open and sculpt the life fit for you!**

Congratulations, Class of 2019! I wish success to all of you in your future endeavors. Thank you.