

Welcome Faculty and administrators, family, friends and fellow graduates. Congratulations!

It is an honor to speak on behalf of the graduates of the School of Arts and Humanities and to celebrate the class of 2020. As a first-generation student, I recognize the hard work that it took for all of us to get to this moment. It is the vivid sacrifice and resilience that is embodied in our grandparents and parents that paved the way for us to receive the valuable treasure of education. I want to express my gratitude to God, my family, my community, and to the hardworking families. I also want to give a special thanks to my mentor, Dr. Jeffrey Reeder and my McNair advisors Dr. Daniel Malpica and Stacey Pelton for believing in our talents, special gifts and creativity.

Dr. Malpica once told me that “it is the cheerleaders behind us that push us to reach the final mark.” However, sometimes self-doubt casts shadows upon our potential and our perspective. During my freshman year of college, I revealed my interest to study abroad to my mentor, Dr. Reeder. He saw my potential and encouraged me to achieve heights that I never dreamed of. However, I was filled with fear. During a long conversation in his office about the value of conquering obstacles and seizing opportunities, I glanced to the right. As I gazed at the bulletin board covered in student postcards from South America and Europe, Dr. Reeder said, “I expect one from you.” At that moment, my perspective became clear, and my self-doubt began to disappear. Dr. Reeder became my cheerleader, championing me to the final mark.

I studied abroad in Madrid, Spain for my sophomore year, and it was an invaluable experience to learn about language and culture at the Complutense University and to immerse myself in their society. This ignited in me a spark for cross-cultural experiences, so I took a solo 5 euro flight from Germany to Belgium! I had never felt so independent, so brave, and so accomplished. I had not only caught a star in my own universe, but I had explored beyond my own galaxy of comfort.

Today, I am graduating with a Bachelor’s of Science in Biology, a Bachelor’s of Arts in Spanish and a minor in Chicano and Latino Studies and am on the road to becoming a cross-cultural and bilingual physician.

Class of 2020, today we are at the end of one season in our lives but at the beginning of a new one. Although there is uncertainty, we are resilient and we will get through this. Life is a constant evolving trajectory and we just need to continue to push ourselves beyond our comfort zone. Please be willing to face your fears, to be open-minded, to take risks, and to grow. Challenges allow us to discover our capacity for success. For these very reasons, I encourage you all now to begin a new chapter in your life with the mindset to **be Limitless: Dream Big, Conquer Your Obstacles, Catch the Stars and Explore the Universe.**

**Thank you.**