

Stephanie Gibson
President, Class of 2009
Remarks to the 109th Undergraduate Commencement
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
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Welcome family members, friends, professors, staff, UMD community members, and most of all, Class of 2009!

We have seen so many changes on campus over the past four years we have been here. Arriving here as mere freshmen some of us were ready to hit the quad and experience everything UMD had to offer while others were frightened to leave their dorms, but we did it.

Just as the campus has changed -- the Dell being closed, the opening of the CCB -- we too have changed. We have grown from late night grillers at Maple Ridge to burgers at Birch. We've experienced 4 a.m. fire alarms on the freshman quad, cramming during 24/7 library hours, wiffle ball on the quad, the campanile, the cement, rumors of tunnels, chippi's from Mirasols, the commercialization of Route 6, and, most importantly, making friends and lifelong relationships.

Today, we are leaving, and as we do, we continue to change. We are once again the freshmen -- the newbies. We are no longer the experienced upperclassman -- the wise ones. We are being released as caterpillars and saplings ready to grow. We are the next generation of freshly molded minds. We need to take our experiences and let them help us grow. Use everything that you have learned here and I know we will all do big things.

The economic and social climate changes daily. During this time one of the hardest tasks is finding a job. For those of you who have conquered this sometimes overwhelming feat, Congratulations! You are one of every five graduates to have accomplished this.

For those of you who haven't, don't look down, keep your head up. It's hard and we have to be persistent, but we can all do it. I have faith.

Look behind you and now to your left and right. This is your support system. We believe in you.

Looking around here, it doesn't seem as big as it once did, you will soon realize it is not all that big and scary out there in the working world. Take your experiences, apply them, and you will go far.

Remember that you are here today. Some people didn't make it. Some have left and come back. Others have transferred in and out trying to find the right fit. UMass Dartmouth Class of 2009, this was our fit and this is our home. It will always welcome us back.

Enjoy your experiences. Learn to love and make the best of everything.

Good Luck '09. Hang in there. And be strong!