

Haverford Class of 2023, I am thrilled to be with you on this jubilant day!

I want to start out with a little levity, care of a group of seniors who asked me on Thursday night if Peanut, our family dog, might cross the stage with them. After all, Peanut and I started with you four years ago. That was a lovely invitation, and Peanut asked me to say thank you. She declined, however, but she hopes to see you at the reception

Class of 2023, you have arrived at this jubilant day through a **journey** unlike any other class in Haverford's history.

You have arrived at this jubilant day deserving every bit of our collective admiration, joy, and respect for all you have accomplished intellectually, personally, and in seeking right relations with the people around you, with peoples far away in time and space, and with the world you seek to improve.

You have arrived at this jubilant day with a lot of hard-won learning under your belts, **as champions of the pivot**.

Becoming champions of the pivot was a vein of experiential learning you didn't sign up for! As champions of the pivot, you are title holders from struggles you did not seek, and you hold a life skill you did not set out to hone. But hone "the pivot" you did, and I see the strengths this skill will impart to you over your lifetime.

You did this in your lived responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. You did this during and subsequent to our 2020 student strike for racial justice. You did this with the Honor Code, as you drafted, discussed, revised, and considered meaningful resolutions. Through those pivots and many others, you have moved yourself, the student body, and the College into better positions to thrive. The divots from your pivots are everywhere at Haverford!

As I watch you encounter the unknown, I see you pivoting again and again, appropriately, and in search of best ways forward. Oftentimes, confusion hits first, when we encounter the unknown. Then I've seen you move to questioning, then learning, hypothesizing, guessing, speculating, testing, more questioning, **sharing** your ideas and questions, collaborating in order to query open questions, finding some answers, applying them to the not-knowing and the challenges at hand, and

continuing to question, learn, collaborate, and push: push the leading edges of the known into the unknown.

And nowhere are the impacts of your pivots more evident than in your learning across the liberal arts. All of us gathered here today are proud of your intellectual, creative, and academic accomplishments, made possible by the doors opened by our incomparable faculty. With their scholarly, purposeful, and wise guidance, and with support systems of staff, faculty, and peers across the campus, you have leaned into the unknown, day in and day out, in every dimension of your multidisciplinary education. **Sometimes**, of course, you were learning what others already knew: unknowns to you yet known to others. Many other times, you were asking and answering questions that had never been asked, or questions that have been perennially asked throughout humankind's existence, but whose answers continue to evolve and evade. You all did that this year through your outstanding senior theses and projects.

Living in the 2020s has required living with a **lot** of "not knowing." Through leaning into the unknown, as **champions of the pivot**, and with an outstanding liberal arts education, your ability to **adapt** has expanded. Your minds and your hearts have developed **flexibility**. Your openness to change has enhanced your capacity to consider input from all directions- from 360 degrees in 3D. You have had lots of practice at moving from confusion to curiosity, and then, in the best of times, to clarity. As champions of the pivot, you are in great shape to take on all kinds of new challenges, or at least to meet them with a degree of familiarity in your well-honed abilities to question, discern, collaborate, and expand your understanding.

I wish to take a minute to cite a source that aligns with my focus on pivoting. Chemistry Professor Lou Charkoudian, Haverford Class of 2003, said at the Senior Athlete Awards reception on Tuesday afternoon, that among the many skills our scholar-athletes have in their wheelhouse, the **pivot** may prove the most valuable. Lou's and my thinking converge here, with our joint admiration of the pivot and its wide applicability across all domains of success.

Now, as I've learned through challenging times, being able to see around corners – or even just far into the distance – provides a significant advantage even to a champion of the pivot. So I'd like to pivot here to look around some corners ahead of you. I'm able to do this thanks to the wisdom and experience of hundreds of Fords around the world.

This is a spoiler alert. My ability to see ahead for you comes courtesy of Haverford alums, who have imparted what has been most meaningful to them about the incomparable liberal arts education they received at Haverford. Four items consistently top their list of the ways Haverford has changed their lives.

- Their intimate learning experiences with faculty
- Their ability to write well
- The lifetime impact of the Honor Code, and
- Lifelong, wonderful friends

In reverse order:

Friendship, integrity, learning, and writing

These are formidable gifts. You don't have to pivot to gain them: you have already grown them here at Haverford. Feed your friendships, practice your writing, value your integrity, and continue learning. As you lean on these gifts from your investments here, may way open when challenges arise. May you routinely be able to pivot, with your friends nearby, love in your heart, and time and space for learning, always learning.