

College of Arts and Sciences

Commencement 2021

Invocation: John Walsh

In the names of all that we call sacred and holy:

This week, we celebrated with all of creation, the earth that gives us life, and the science that enables us to understand our responsibility to live sustainably upon the earth.

We offer our prayers of gratitude and ask for blessings, all who have made this day possible. We give you thanks for these young men and young women who have accomplished so much and worked so hard to make this day, this dream, a reality.

We thank you for their families who have sacrificed and given so much for this moment in the lives of the students and for their future. We thank you for this faculty and for their rich contribution to the learning experience. We thank you for all those who have given so generously of their resources to make this wonderful place of possibility.

And now, we ask for your blessings on this special moment, as we celebrate the Class of 2020. Amen.

Deans Welcoming Remarks: Dean Wuhs

Hi, class of 2020. My name is Steve Wuhs, and I am now the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. I'm here to welcome you back to the University of Redlands—at least virtually—today, as we don't so much celebrate your commencement but rather recognize your studies, your accomplishments, and your connections to the community that you probably last saw during some harried days in March of last year.

I wasn't your dean—you were lucky to have Kendrick Brown in that spot, but he's moved on to Morehouse College since you left. For some of you, I was a professor, advisor, and mentor in political science, and for those of you who are international students, it was my job to support your success inside and outside the classroom. It was just in January that I moved into the dean's office. And by that, I mean my kitchen table, most days.

You've also been on the move. It started when you came here, most of you in Fall 2016. You moved around socially, gradually finding your spot in the clubs and organizations, teams, and majors that fit you best. Settled in, you moved through semesters, through speakers and events, through semesters, and May Terms abroad (when we took those things for granted!).

Your years here weren't just marked by your movement, but by the movements happening in the world around us, some of which shaped our campus lives. I'm thinking of civil rights here—like when Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter Global Network, came to Memorial Chapel, or when Deaf activist Nyle DiMarco spoke on campus about breaking barriers as a deaf man, or, finally, when civil rights legend Angela Davis energized our campus community.

We had leaders here too. Jacob Green was an extraordinary student and human being who deeply touched the lives of many on campus with his bright smile and dynamic energy. As a Race and Ethnic Studies major and activist in CDI, he

was working on a capstone project on Black Men and the Power of Love and preparing to apply to a master's program in higher education so he could make his diversity work a career. I know that many of you continue to feel the tremendous loss of his tragic death, and we want to acknowledge him as an enduring and vital part of your class.

Then, March 2020. When you uprooted yourself from your res hall rooms and moved home or elsewhere to continue your semester, and the rest of us set up home offices in our living rooms, bedrooms, even laundry rooms. And then, all that motion came to a halt. Stationary, we tested the limits of our WiFi, got accustomed to distorted, pixelated faces, and navigated the labyrinth of teams, zoom, WebEx, Moodle, and more. We got to know one another differently —my students saw my back patio, I met siblings, parents, and children of my students; we saw your homes, your furnishings, the cultural and religious symbols on your walls (in one weekly meeting with students, the virgin of Guadalupe was watching over us). But life kind of stood still.

And then April 2020 came, and it went, and we stayed home, concerned for our health and safety and the health and safety of our communities. And during that time, your scheduled commencement came, and it went. And I want you to know that I appreciate the loss that was for you and for your families. Life had been moving toward that stroll across the Greek Theater for a long time. I'm especially aware that for many of you (as first-gen students), your families had been imagining that moment with a special kind of pride.

I'm so sorry that life doesn't have a rewind button, a way to move backward. You deserved to walk, we all agree. And you deserve, still, to be celebrated and recognized in person. We will get there—because we are proud of you, your achievements, your grit, your contributions to your communities. For now, I hope that you enjoy this virtual opportunity to come back together again and see where your friends and classmates have gone since you were last together.

We wish you the best, and we hope you'll stay in touch with us, and each other, here at Redlands.

Och Tamale!

President's Welcome Remarks: President Kuncl

Good afternoon. I'm Ralph Kuncl, the 11th president of your great University, and it is a privilege to speak to you today.

I'm here to honor you—our 2020 graduates. On behalf of the entire University of Redlands community, we are enormously inspired by your achievements and congratulate you today.

To your families, we salute you as well. In countless ways, your graduates' accomplishments are also yours, for, without you, many of today's graduates would not have arrived at this milestone in their educational journey.

I am standing in front of Memorial Chapel, looking out over the Quad—one of my very favorite places on our historic Redlands campus. When I met you five years ago at your Opening Convocation August in 2016, I encouraged you to get involved and build relationships with everyone you met here. I promised that if you invested in Redlands, Redlands would invest back in you one hundredfold, and that your college experience—and the rest of your lives—would be forever changed.

And I feel certain that this is precisely the place you would wish you could be: at **YOUR** Redlands—here, being celebrated by all who know just how hard you have worked to earn your degree: your family, your faculty, and your friends. It is not the same without you here, and oh, how we miss you.

It has been a year where so much has been lost and sacrificed and demanded. The only constant during this pandemic year has been change, which has been

thrust upon you and all of us. Many of these changes have been hard, and some have been extremely hard.

And yet, you are here.

It occurs to me that, on such a day as this, we should take stock of our triumphs—like those we celebrate today—and maybe even also our failings along the way, and ask: what will we carry with us to the **NEXT** chapter of our lives?

Perhaps most important, of course, is your University of Redlands degree – representing your hard work, your resilience, and the critical thinking and problem-solving skills you honed during your Redlands education. After all, this past year was the most consequential in a century. Your Redlands degree and the knowledge you gained will take you far, and that, in and of itself, is cause for great celebration.

You also carry with you *all that you have learned* here at Redlands—in your coursework, in your activities, in your friendships, on athletic fields and courts and pools, and in all of your experiences on your campus and beyond.

You carry with you also *the people* who helped to spark your passions and inspire you to learn, both about the subjects that interested you and *about yourself*. Here, of course, I speak of your professors, your coaches, your friends, the outstanding staff who supported you, and the mentors who guided you along the way, helping you overcome hurdles and find your purpose in life.

Mark Twain once said that “the two most important days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you find out why.”

Finding out why is, for many of you, the reason you came to Redlands, and you have become the person you are today in great part because you are now a Redlands graduate, the person *who earned your degree*—step by difficult step—

with the guidance of others who invested in you. These realities about yourself are gifts, and ones you will carry to sustain and nourish you as you grow into the next chapter of your life—and for the rest of your life.

I am reminded of a poem about saying goodbye to friends by Southern Californian poet Flavia Weedn:

Some people come into our lives and quickly go.

Some people MOVE OUR SOULS to dance.

They awaken us to a new understanding with the passing whisper of their wisdom.

Some people make the sky more beautiful to gaze upon.

They stay in our lives for a while leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never ever the same.

Today, we all cannot be physically together. But I stand here for you on our campus in Redlands, while our beloved university community is scattered far and wide, including you, our resilient graduates.

Here, now, I speak to you from our hearts, from your faculty and trustees, your staff, and your community: with time and distance, our bonds have been severely stretched over the past year. But they will **NEVER** break—they **CAN** never break. You have left a footprint on our hearts, and we, on yours, and none of us will ever be the same.

Congratulations, Class of 2020! And Godspeed.

Student Speaker: Maxine Mchunguzi '20

Class of 2020:

The last time I had the honor of speaking to you all, we were each beginning our journeys of 10,000 miles. And trust me when I say I had underestimated all

the ways that our paths would meander, how layovers would be increasingly long, and the hard, unplanned pitstops some of us would have to take along the way.

I definitely did not imagine I'd be sitting here talking to you all a year later. How has it been a year through yet another video? But in the midst of my heartbreaking knowledge, of all the things that the pandemic has stripped of us, each in different ways, I learned that I had to change my perspective.

Sometimes I had to sit in the passenger seat, look out the window, and see the clear skies that had just been touched by the storm. Now we can all admit that COVID has changed life as we know it. We may each know someone we've lost to the virus, people or places we haven't been able to see, and opportunities that did not come to fruition.

I still remember the day I received the email asking us to evacuate from campus. It still feels like a bad dream. The mad rush to pack and leave. We did not get to say goodbye in the ways we wanted to, whether that was with friends, professors, or amazing custodians. We missed out on senior ceremonies and events to celebrate all the long hours we put into getting our degrees. But most importantly, we missed our graduation, which is arguably not just an event for the individual, but the community as well.

Since freshmen procession, I can imagine what each of us had in mind, all of our mentors, parents, friends, organizations, cheering us on in the heat of the Greek amphitheatre. I would like to take this moment to acknowledge and especially congratulate first-generation students who did not get to celebrate this moment in the ways that you deserved.

Graduating is never easy, especially in the midst of the pandemic. You can't necessarily ask your parents or mentors or friends how to handle a pandemic.

And because of this adjustment period, it has given me and hopefully you the chance to do some introspection. Lately, I've been focusing on changing my perspective. Because a W can look like an M based on where you're standing. And so I have to acknowledge some of the positive things I have seen my peers do this past year. From the copious amounts of banana bread— baked, whipped coffee— drank, and Tik Tok dances —learned. I've had the privilege to see you get into your dream graduate schools, get new jobs, and having new, amazing experiences. I did some things that I never thought I would do, such as subscribing to Zoom premium in these little moments that give me hope for all the miles that you're traveling along your journey.

I hold on to the hope that we will see old roommates, sorority sisters, professors, friends, and all the people who enriched our Redlands experience. I know when this day comes, we will inspire one another with fantastic stories and memories that happened along the way. Because the most important part of any journey is all the things you see whilst going through it.

I hope your pitstop has a gas station with amazing snacks. Your layover is comfortable. And if you're one of the lucky few whose journey has continued on course, I hope, and I pray that your metaphorical flight has extra legroom. Until we meet again, I would like to say in my mother tongue of Kiswahili, “*safari njema*,” which means, “Have a safe journey.” Och tamale.

Student Speaker: Jacob Miner '20

Hello, Class of 2020. It has been a little over a year since we've last been together on the campus that we love. In her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, researcher, author, and podcast host Brene Brown said, “Only when we are

brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.”

This has been a tough year. And what has really helped me get to this experience is so many of you, my peers from the university. We have a whole network of Bulldogs who are just one message away, to connect with someone old or connect with someone new.

To quote Brene Brown once more, “Love is the last thing we need to ration right now.” We've all experienced our own sense of loss, and my heart goes out to each and every one of you. The clouds are lifting slowly but surely from this very long storm. I am ecstatic for the day that we can finally be Bulldogs back together again.

Congratulations, Class of 2020! Hold this milestone near and dear, for this is an achievement that no one can take away from you. Stay well, stay safe, and Och tamale!

Presentation of Graduate Candidates

The College of Arts and Sciences is pleased to present students who have earned Masters’ degrees in the fields of Music or Communication Sciences and Disorders. By extending their studies beyond the Bachelor’s degree, these students have achieved a more sophisticated understanding of their disciplines, and we wish to celebrate their accomplishment. We now turn to the awarding of degrees to students in these graduate programs.

- Candidates for the degree Masters of Music
- Candidates for the degree Masters of Science

The candidates whose names are printed in the program have satisfactorily completed all requirements for graduation, or soon will do so, and are recommended by the faculty for their degrees.

Conferring of Graduate Degrees: President Kuncil

Here is the moment you've been waiting for: *By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of the University of Redlands and the laws of the State of California, I confer upon you the respective masters' degrees with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities appertaining thereto.*

Presentation of Undergraduate Candidates: Dean Wuhs

The candidates whose names are featured in this program have satisfactorily completed all requirements for graduation, or soon will do so and are recommended by the faculty for their degrees.

- Candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
- Candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Music
- Candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Science

Conferring of Undergraduate Degrees: President Kuncil

Here is the moment you've been waiting for: *By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of the University of Redlands and the laws of the State of California, I confer upon you the respective bachelor's degrees with all the rights, privileges, and the responsibilities appertaining thereto.*

Benediction by John Walsh

As is my tradition, I want to paraphrase an ancient blessing:

Good-bye...

which is short for 'God be with you.'

God be with you as you say goodbye to this place to venture out into an unknown experience.

God be with you as you seek to bring wisdom and compassion with you into this new world.

God be with you as you work to enable lasting peace and true justice to be a part of everyone's experience--not just yours.

God be with you as you endeavor to save this planet and preserve the beauty of our common universe for generations to come.

God be with you in all your endeavors...personal and professional.

God be with you...

Good-bye.

Alma Mater (SONG)

*O, that dear old U of R,
Thy children near and far
Will sing to thee and all thy glories tell;
Where the orange blossoms grow
And the waters gently flow,
That dear old U of R we love so well.*

*O, that dear old U of R,
Whose emblem shines afar,
Eternal as the hills we love so well;
Where the mountains tall and grand
Like an inspiration stand
That dear old U of R we love so well.*

O, that dear old U of R,

*The years can never mar
The memories of thee we love so well;
Where the friendships are so dear
That we leave them with a tear,
That dear old U of R we love so well.*

END OF CEREMONY