

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 2021. Amen.

Deans Welcoming Remarks: Dean Wuhs

Good afternoon. My name is Steve Wuhs, and I am the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a long-time professor in Political Science; and it is my pleasure to speak with you on this special day, the day of your

graduation from the University of Redlands. We are all so proud of you for your achievements, your engagement, your creativity, your intellect, and more than anything else, your tenacity.

Before I get back to your tenacity, I want to acknowledge that we're connecting virtually and asynchronously. I'm on a rare visit to campus, where some of you might be living, but many of you are not—because you're off-campus, out of state, or even out of the country. We miss having you here on campus. I miss being on campus. And I'm so sorry that we're not able to celebrate this day with you and your loved ones. We hope that you are all safe and healthy.

It's been a long four years, or a little less for you graduate students. In case you can't remember anything prior to March 2020, let me remind you that prior to the pandemic, we were disagreeing a lot and struggling a lot:

DACA, border, cages, sanctuary cities.

Post Office, Space Force.

Venezuela, Tariffs, China, Putin.

Trump, Ivanka, Jared, Mueller.

Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, Christine Blasey Ford.

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and more.

It's a challenging world.

Here on campus, though, things were better, more hopeful: director and screenwriter Barry Jenkins, from *Moonlight*, spoke at Orton Center, as did Michelle Obama's former Chief of Staff Tina Tchen. So did civil rights leaders, activists, and leaders Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, and Nyle DiMarco.

Changing the world. You did that work too—rising against hunger, getting on the bus, giving Free Hugs, participating in TEDX, joining Pete Townshend, Billy Idol (high school flashback), and Alfie Boe at the Greek Theatre. Nice work, Chapel Singers and Bel Canto.

And maybe you were there when we welcomed our colleague from Marin, Rev. Yolanda Norton, to lead the Beyoncé Mass, using the music of Beyoncé to celebrate the contributions of black women.

Almost out of nowhere, the pandemic. I remember the warnings in January of last year, the anxiety of February. And like you, I remember the disruption of March. For me, it was about keeping my students engaged and on track despite the disruption, and making sure your international student classmates had somewhere to go and be safe when we finally had to close down our campus. For you, it meant coming home from study away, the interruption of your clinical practice in CDIS, cancellation of your athletic seasons, and so much more.

That's where the tenacity comes in—because you all wouldn't be stopped, wouldn't be interrupted, pandemic be damned. Subscription boxes—done. MLK spoken word—done. Bulldogs Vote—done. Online dating—done. Public Square conversations—done. Fresh Air Challenge—done. Virtual Jasper's Corner—done. And trivia, and bingo, and Kahoot, and social media, and more. Plus, you went to your classes, you excelled in your classes, and now, you're graduating because of that work.

And look—the pandemic didn't totally stop life. Eventually, finally, you made it back to campus—some of you, at least. And you got your weekly tests, you abided by your protocols. Some of you competed in SCIAC sports, some of you actually had classes in classrooms on-campus—archaeology, theater, physics. There was hope. But there was grief: some of you lost loved ones to the pandemic; for others, losses of work in your families, uncertainty about how to make ends meet.

We're still in that present: our lives disrupted, our tenacity challenged, and missing what might have been. I wish I could be reading your names out loud, not recording them next week. I wish your families could see you, cheer for

you. I wish you could be recognized for your achievements in person. I wish I could worry that you don't trip on the stairs of the Greek Theater, or that I don't. I wish some member of the men's swim team could approach President Kuncl in his speedo. I want to hear you sing, holler, and give a compelling speech—all live. But we're not there, and we can't be there. You don't deserve it, and neither do your family and loved ones, and neither do the faculty and staff who have worked alongside you these past years.

So, please, for all of us—be determined to succeed, to overcome the next set of obstacles that life throws at you, and please, please, know that we at the University of Redlands miss you, value you, and know that you will make us and your loved ones proud.

Och Tamale, friends.

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 at our virtual Commencement Ceremony at the University of Redlands.

I'm here to honor you—our 2021 graduates—on this important occasion in your lives and in the life of our University. 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. Inside the Chapel is the very place I met most of you four years ago at your Opening Convocation.

Do you remember it? A Wednesday at the end of August in 2017—a scorching, 109-degree afternoon, an occasion at which 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, as you graduate today, 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. You made it to the finish line.

It is a tremendous accomplishment. And 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, on this momentous day of Commencement, 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 2021! And Godspeed.

Student Speaker: Abigail Fine '21

Class of 2021, We did it!

After hundreds of hours on zoom and in the classroom, dozens of night shifts at jobs, a few all-nighters in the library, thousands of laughs with friends, and the occasional, “professor, you’re on mute!” we can finally all breathe a sigh of relief and gratitude. We’re graduating.

Four years ago, when many of us first stepped on campus and braved those 115 degrees move-in and orientation days, none of us imagined our commencement would look like this. We expected to be shoulder to shoulder in the Greek theatre, surrounded by friends and family, and filled with nerves and excitement for the next chapter. Instead, we are a little further apart this year. Spending our senior year in a global pandemic makes it hard to remember what campus felt like before today, so I’ve cherry-picked a few familiar scenes to jog your memories:

We decorated our residence hall rooms with pictures and knocked on our neighbor’s door to shyly introduce ourselves, we thanked Lydia and Carlita and the harvest table staff for our food, we sang at the top of our lungs when Jesse McCartney performed Beautiful Soul at Springfest, we cheered on our fellow

bulldogs at a game and chanted the och tamale, and we conquered our fear of heights on an OP trip.

I've spent much of my time in college guiding prospective students and their families around campus as a tour guide. And I always end my tour with my "why Redlands?" Over four years ago, what about this place made you send in your deposit and commit? I want to challenge all of you to think about that same question. What is your "why Redlands?"

For some of you, it was the location. In beautiful sunny SoCal, where we can spend hours outside, enjoying the landscape around us. I'm from Minnesota, and nothing gives me greater joy than when the temperature difference between campus and my parents' house is more than 50 degrees. Maybe for you, the palm trees, the mountains, and the quad were so enticing, you had to choose Redlands.

For some of you, it was the opportunity to make your voice heard. You recognized the incredible diversity at Redlands and were excited to protest injustices, start a club targeted at inclusion, or engage in tough conversations with peers. You knew that at the Johnston center, your creativity would shine, and you would be able to charter your own path. My eyes have been opened by participating in the public square forum conversations to better understand the injustices both on campus and beyond. You rose up with students, faculty, and staff to start to make Redlands a more inclusive, diverse, and safe community for all, and this impact is why you chose Redlands.

For others of you, it was the educational advantages and career opportunities. You couldn't wait for your Salzburg semester or May term in Palau. You knew that at Redlands, you could grow not only as a student but as a leader. You stayed a summer to do research with a professor, you became the president of a club, you joined an honor society, or you received a named scholarship. You couldn't wait to experience a liberal arts education to become a more well-

rounded individual. I think back about trekking up those three brutal flights of stairs in Hall of Letters to barely make it to Art Svenson's Constitutional Law class on time, but the second class started I didn't even remember my burning thighs because the conversation was so engaging. You were excited about small class sizes where you were both seen and heard, and that is why you chose Redlands.

Whatever they are, your experiences here have shaped you, whether you've realized it or not. Four years ago, you chose Redlands, but not only did you choose Redlands, Redlands chose you back. The people here— faculty, administrators, staff, your peers— are as proud of us as we are grateful to them. I hope you are glad that four years ago, whatever that “why Redlands” was for you, you said yes to going on this journey.

I often tell people I have the best job on campus because I just get to share my experiences about the U of R. Not all of them have been good, but there are many that I wouldn't trade. My “why Redlands” is the community we have built here. I thrive in an environment that fosters kindness and love that I can't walk anywhere without running into a few friendly faces. Even as I'm leaving, this is my home, and I'm so glad I chose Redlands.

Coming to Redlands from 1,500 miles away, I was petrified I would feel alone here. So, when Thanksgiving rolled around my first year and it was too expensive to fly home, I had four offers from my U of R peers with whom I could stay and celebrate the holiday. Some of my best friends offered a seat at their table, but other offers came from professors or just someone I had mentioned my circumstance to in class. This truly exemplifies the community mentality I am so fortunate to have been a part of these past four years.

While we may have been seniors in a year unlike any other, we will leave this institution as better people, as we've have experienced such highs and lows. We gained the skills we came to college seeking, like public speaking, writing,

research, and time management, but the COVID-19 pandemic awarded us skills we never signed up for, like how to balance responsibilities, the importance of communication, and maybe a new hobby or two. We have learned the skills of resilience and persistence, and we have shined even in darkness. We should be so proud of what we've accomplished, Class of 2021. We were able to graduate in the middle of a global pandemic, and that is no small feat.

So now, what do we do with this newfound skillset? It is time for all of us to move on and be change-makers. We will take what we've learned, especially how to navigate Zoom, and begin our path forward. It might feel really scary right now, but we are ready. We will go onto jobs, further education, building families, and always knowing that Redlands is a home we can return to. We have never been more ready to enter a world that is waiting for us with open arms.

So, class of 2021, remember your personal "why Redlands?", now, let it propel you into the future. Let that reason for why you chose your university help you make future decisions. Remind yourself of your personal values and acknowledge the change and growth you have experienced over the past four years. There will definitely be ups and most likely downs, but now you have a steady place to always return to, a personal mission statement. Hold tight to it.

I am so excited to see where our future takes us, class of 2021! But for now, let us celebrate our personal accomplishments, virtual cheers to us!

Recognition of the 2020–2021 Outstanding Faculty: Kathy Ogren

Good afternoon, and congratulations to the Class of 2021. Your successful conclusion to this extraordinary journey to reach this Commencement in a year of pandemic disrupted expectations is commendable. It's my privilege to acknowledge faculty colleagues who aided and guided you on that journey. They, too, are proud of your success.

Please join me in recognizing faculty members who have received awards for excellence:

- For **Teaching**, Dr. Sawa Kurotani, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- For **Research and Creative Work**: Dr. Jessie Hewitt, Department of History
- For **Service**: Dr. Joanna Bieri, Department of Mathematics and the CAS Working Group #1 (Nathaniel Cline, Hillary Jenkins, Youna Kwak, Paige Mann, Lillian Larsen, and Lisa Olson)
- For **Teaching Innovation**: Dr. Heather King, Department of English
- **Outstanding Writing Instruction**: Dr. Nathaniel Cline, Department of Economics
- **Faculty Global Impact Award**: Dr. Daniel Klooster, Environmental Studies
- **Mortar Board's College of Arts and Sciences Professor of the Year**: Candace Glendening, Department of Biology

Several faculty will retire at the end of this academic year. Please join me in thanking them for their dedicated service to the College and University:

Jim Spickard, Les Canterbury, Daniele Slusser, Debra VanEngelen, Patricia Wasielewski, Raul Acero, Lawry Finsen, Claudia Ingram, Daniel Kiefer, Victoria Lewis, James Malcolm, Barbara Murray, John Walsh, Mike Maynard, Jack Osborn, Henry Acquaye, and Daniel Wacks.

Recognition of Veterans and Others

I am happy to recognize the veterans of our Armed Forces who are in attendance this evening. These individuals are being recognized for their outstanding service to our country.

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