

Oration Speech

Brooks Johnson '21

Good morning all. My name is Brooks Johnson and I am honored to speak to all of you today. I am also grateful to be part of this wonderful class.

With that being said, first of all, I want to thank you, my fellow students, for a great senior year. You have made my entire time at Berkeley amazing.

I will undoubtedly miss the incredible times we have had here. I will miss the races to the chicken tenders. I will miss the tailgates and the Headmasters' Challenges. I will miss the times in the locker room and out on the field. I will miss the moves at our dances, parties and at prom. I will miss laughing in class and in the halls. I will miss the good times joking on the deck of the lunchroom and being squished inside the cafeteria booths. I will miss cheering on my friends and tossing around lobsters as our Ice Bucs dominate the rink. I will miss watching and listening to the great performances in the Straz, and the tear-jerking displays of karaoke. I will miss watching my friends and classmates stuff their faces with pumpkin pie until even the onlookers were about to throw up.

But most of all I will miss all of you, my Berkeley family. So thank you again for these last four years.

I would also like to thank all the teachers who enlightened and strengthened our minds. Thank you to the cafe staff for making sure we never went hungry.

Thank you to all the cleaning staff for picking up after us, as we often made a mess. Thank you to the college counselors who guided us to the right path for a promising future. Thank you to the technology department for making sure we didn't skip a beat. Thank you to the security crew for keeping us safe. Thank you to all of our coaches for pushing us to do more than our best. Thank you all for a great four years.

I like to think of our transition from high school to college as a waterslide. Our lives up to now have been spent waiting in line and climbing that long and winding tower, to be able to go down the exciting slide that is college. We started without a care, waiting at the bottom of our tower. We made many friends and memories as children. As we made our way up the tower, we began to look around; we saw a bigger world and our different experiences matured us. Every year we saw how high we had climbed and how much closer the top became. As we complete our senior year, we are finally waiting at the top of the tower.

The climb is behind us and we are eager and maybe a little nervous. We talk to those in line with us for the final moments as we start to eye the lifeguard giving the thumbs up to the people in front of us. As we graduate and start our summer before college, we will get the thumb's up. We will enter the waterslide. Some of the dark tunnels and sharp turns in front of us may seem scary, but these are the parts that make it exciting. Make sure you make the most of it, soak it all in, and

try to enjoy every aspect of the ride knowing that when you reach the bottom you will make a big splash marking the beginning of the rest of your life.

Our time at Berkeley Preparatory School has come to an end. When writing this speech, I wanted to give you all some words of advice. So, I thought to myself what is it that gets me going? I first thought it was the end goal: everything works out and everything is going well. Well, of course, that would be nice. But when I think back to all the groups, teams and challenges I have gone through, it is not the end result that I remember. Instead, it is the process itself, the time spent together, working together and practicing together.

This moment was when I realized the importance of buying in, buying into something you love. For all the struggle, the success becomes sweeter, and oftentimes the feeling of accomplishment is better than any other award or trophy. We could all coast along in life and go through the motions. We could all flatline, too afraid to do something bigger, too afraid to fail. But that is not life. Life is about the ups and downs, for there is no success without failure.

Class of 2021, it has been amazing and an honor to spend these last four years with you all. Our Berkeley family will branch out across the world and this nation, but we will always have each other.