

When I initially found out I would be giving our graduation speech, my first idea was to figure it out when I got on stage, hoping no one would notice. So, as we are gathered here today for our graduation, a culmination of 4 years of effort now behind us, we can reminisce upon what great things aided our growth as students and as people. So, as we now stand here looking like a failed group costume, consider that a short time ago we stood apart, distanced by unfamiliarity and by our fears of the worst.

One thing I have always thought is that people tend to assume we know something instead of taking the time to look and see if it's true. I thought of that when I was walking home, I took a second to look up and once again see the recently green trees lining the escarpment. I tell you of this because that is something I'm giving up come September and I might not have had the chance to appreciate it or other things again. And so let us all try to recall the earlier experiences that are important.

When I first came to this school I was lost, and I don't mean metaphorical because I was young, I mean I got lost in the building, showed up 20 minutes late to class. And that might seem pretty normal, however, at the time it felt horrible, I remember feeling like I was 1 foot tall, and had three untied shoes.

My lack of confidence and worries for what others thought, had me aloof and distraught. Those factors were affecting more than just the walk to class, I was being held back mentally because of the concern about everything I did, I thought the things around me were negative. That other students are competition, or out to get me and the lessons and teachers were obstacles with the worst intentions.

But what might be best part about that story is that I can recall the shame I felt and how I've gotten better about it, but I couldn't tell you what class I was headed to or how it affected me. This shows that

this school is a place of improvement that wasn't limited to the classrooms or curriculums. We the people, our thoughts and interactions gave as much growth and learning as anything else.

And that is what I found out and appreciated going forward from there. That leading up to this grade 12 year. A point in life that I'm happy with, where those things about the shoes and being 1 foot tall could actually be true, and I would let it affect me as the same way.

I would like to think we have all lived up to our high school hopes and dreams, and that it is largely thanks to each other and this community and school.

And speaking of which, a word for maybe most under appreciated and resilient part of the DVSS, The staff,

All of whom have given effort into making life at DVSS better, who made sacrifices such that we can continue to improve and not worry about the mistakes we've made.

I talking to the teachers in the classrooms, coaches, the office administrators, guidance counsellors, the faculty that cleaned up after us without, and to the principals, of which we've had many.

All of you have been understanding, you've heard our problems and taken action where others wouldn't, you have been people, and friends, sources of inspiration and problem solvers for all of the students, Wether it be hallway greetings or serious conversations, even when we make it difficult, you've always had our intentions and dreams in mind. And maybe we don't say it enough, but truly, from everyone, thank you for being the people that has guided through 4 years of early mornings and stressful evenings. You are the cornerstones of this institution and the students who stand here now and those going forward wouldn't be the same without you.

And now for another important group of people, our families,

The debt from what you've done is unmeasurable, I might feel like a responsibility that you must do, however, what is a choice is the ways you excel and how inspire the students here.

It's through the forgiveness, the advice, believing those nights when we "had" to do homework, and the unrelenting confidence you had that we would make it this far, that we kept going.

You have already done too much, and we may draw apart, in following a higher education, however, know you have always been important to us and our academic accomplishments and that won't soon stop.

And now, my fellow students, peers and friends.

It would be easy say that the next few years are going to be easier or better, that everyone here will be great, that we will shape tomorrows future.

But I think all of us have some doubts.

What can be said is why we aren't going to stop here; we may treat today like a finish line for ending high school, realistically I say it is a checkpoint, one of those plastic tables with the waters on it. Because life won't end today. You will be put to the test again, you will feel stressed and angry, things won't always be clear, but also, there will be another celebration to be had and more friends to have it with, today doesn't have to be the final anything, even if our lives are changing drastically, today is solely meant to celebrate us, the things we've done and the time we've shared. It is also, to talk about moving forwards, the newer and greater opportunities you'll have and not fought seize, as well as the more demanding mental and physical requirements,

Personally, what keeps me going isn't a dream or desire, but a curiosity I don't know what I will become, but I want to know if I'm good at it, or what it means to me at that time, and I hope all of you have a similar curiosity, something yet to be discovered, and a reason to kept fighting.

And for some words to the wise,

They say, “no man is an island”, when I first came too this was school, I did not believe that.

I thought there were oceans of confusion and disgust between me and other people, however after 4 years of obstacles, of fatigue and of friendships, I've grown out of the isolation, and I can say that I had fun and felt belonging.

I mention this now, because in a short few months you may start to feel the same, so if you do, then remember today, remember how we've pulled through before, and how our perception and animosity can be skewed, think about those to your left and right, what they used to be to you, versus what you are now.

In short, don't assume that you already know what you are or will be, the best of us today might be the worst of us tomorrow, all that I ask is that you take the time to look up at those trees on the escarpment, up to the trees of your future and see it to the end, do it for yourself, do it for me and do it for the name DVSS.

Thank you, Class of 2024