

**Ijaz Ul Haq G'25**, President of the Graduate Student Senate  
Commencement Greeting (as prepared) – Sunday, May 19, 2024

Esteemed faculty, distinguished guests, dear family and friends, and most importantly, the resilient graduates of both undergraduate and graduate programs of the University of Vermont,

Today, as we stand together in this grand celebration of achievement and transition, we mark not only the end of an educational chapter but also the beginning of new, promising journeys that lie ahead. As your President of the Graduate Student Senate, and former Vice President, it has been my profound honor to witness and contribute to the vibrant academic and community life that makes UVM unique. Today, let's celebrate that spirit with a robust round of applause.

During my tenure, I have had the unique privilege to see many of you grow, overcome challenges, and achieve remarkable things, both in classrooms and within our community. It's these experiences that weave the rich fabric of our Catamount spirit—a spirit characterized by resilience, intellect, and compassion.

Our journey together has been about more than academics; it has been about building a community that supports and uplifts each other. This is evident not just in our scholarly pursuits but in the ways we have come together to face global challenges. Amidst a world strained by tensions and uncertainty, you have stood strong, demonstrating the enduring power of education and community in fostering hope and resilience. This spirit of endurance and advocacy you've shown is worth celebrating.

Today, we applaud not only your academic achievements but also your remarkable character and community involvement. To the families, friends, and faculty who have been steadfast in their support, you are the unsung heroes of these successes. Your guidance and faith have been indispensable. Let's give them a well-deserved round of applause.

As we look to the future, remember that the uncertainties of the world offer not just challenges but opportunities. Opportunities to innovate, to lead, to make an impact. As graduates of UVM, you are exceptionally well-prepared to meet these challenges head-on. With your education, your experiences, and the networks you've built here, you are poised to contribute to solutions, to build bridges, and to lead with integrity.

In your future endeavors, carry forward the lessons of curiosity, determination, and ethical responsibility you've honed here. As you venture into diverse fields and spread across different geographies, remember, the values you've embodied at UVM will always serve as your compass.

But no matter where life takes you, consider UVM your forever home. Stay connected to this community that has shaped you, supported you, and celebrated with you. Return often, not just to reminisce about your college days but to inspire and engage with future generations who will walk these paths.

And let's not forget the beautiful state of Vermont, whose seasons and landscapes have been a backdrop to your educational journey. The Green Mountains, the crisp air of our fall, the vibrant community events, and the spirit of innovation and resilience are all part of what makes Vermont not just a place to study, but a place to grow and call home. Carry this piece of Vermont with you, let it inspire you to always reach higher and dream bigger.

So, to the Class of 2024, I say this: Stand tall and proud for what you have achieved and for the paths you will forge. The world awaits the imprint of your intelligence, your passion, and your dreams. Let's stand, let's cheer for the monumental achievements we celebrate today and for the incredible adventures that await us.

Thank you, graduates, for enriching our community, inspiring change, and pushing the boundaries of what's possible. Together, we have made a difference, and I am eager to see how you will continue to do so.

Thank you, and once more, go Catamounts!