

Commencement 2013

Remarks by Dr. Jay Kahn, Interim President of Keene State College

Welcome, Members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff; parents and family, special guests; and most of all to Keene State College graduates. Thank you all for your contributions to this ceremony.

Today, we launch a new cohort of citizens, leaders, and scholars shaped by the rigors of a liberal education and the Keene State experience. As the class of 2013, your journey at the College has kept with the time-tested values of a centuries-old educational tradition, emphasizing preparation for fulfilling careers, service, citizenship, and lifelong learning.

You, the class of 2013, have been here during a remarkably dynamic and extraordinary time and throughout your years at Keene State College, you have been setting records. You are the largest graduating class in the history of this 104 year old college, 1,222 graduates. Holocaust and genocide studies students, you inaugurated a new foreign exchange program in Krakow, Poland. Technology, Architecture and Product Design students, you helped plan and open the new TDS Center. You challenged the College to fund raise for the installation of one of NH's largest solar arrays and to achieve a Platinum certification from the US Green Building Council. And 17 of your classmates are among the College's first Bachelors in Nursing graduates and they will immediately be a resource to this region filling jobs and Monadnock and Cheshire hospitals and other health care agencies.

You have achieved national honors across our academic programs, demonstrating the integration of knowledge, real world problem solving, creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. You have demonstrated the value of teamwork – in classroom projects, capstone courses, 24 honor societies, 115 student organizations, 18 athletic teams, and 10 fraternities and sororities. In your teams you have demonstrated how competition can be harnessed through collaboration. Management student teams earned two Small Business Institute first place awards, Geography students presented workforce housing studies in Keene and a livability study for the town of Marlborough which won national honors. Environmental Studies students did land, water and air quality studies throughout the region, Biology students worked with this College's distinguished teacher and our distinguished researcher and gained admissions to renowned graduate programs.

Sociology students researched causal relationships of homelessness, Architecture students designed projects as diverse as a health spa in Northampton, MA to a parking deck in Keene to a vocational school in Haiti.

Art and Graphics Design students exhibited in Boston and at our Thorne Gallery. Journalism students, working on the Equinox student newspaper, earned 12 national awards, including 3 firsts. Theatre and Dance Department earned distinction at the Kennedy Center's, American College Festival, capturing numerous awards. And Product Design students invented life-saving products.

The Keene State Swimming team had 7 all-Americans and the Track and Field team had three all-Americans and one national champion.

Your volunteerism helped Keene win the Pumpkin wars on Home and Garden TV. You inaugurated our first Community Service Day, where 200 volunteered, inaugurated Clean Keene where 91 students participated and you helped inaugurate KSC Student Ambassadors. You launched Relay for Life and helped it grow to 500 walkers, you led Beautiful Lengths where 60 students shed 8 inches of their hair to support cancer patients. You led 10 alternative spring break trips to distressed communities. You led the Barefoot Walk, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes and the Alzheimer's Walk. You've done a lot of walking, and contributed thousands of hours and dollars to worthy causes. And on April 15th, five of your classmates and two faculty members were at the Boston Marathon, staffing runner recovery tents, when two bombs exploded, and they then served as support to first responders.

As student athletes you excelled in both the pursuits of the mind and the body bringing home trophies for the best athletic performance in the Little East Conference for the 12th and maybe the 13th consecutive year, and for the second year, you earned the Presidents Cup for the highest cumulative grade point average of any program in the Conference.

You are going forth as teachers, architects, nurses, therapists and artists. 300 of you are graduating in Science, Technology and Math programs that are vital to our nation's manufacturing industries and you have jobs at Google, AOL, and Red River IT firms and at Timken, Corning, AB Technologies and many others manufacturers in this region. Some of you have earned graduate school fellowships and assistantships around the country.

You are engaging and fun, and determined to make a difference. And you have gained confidence that your families never thought you capable of.

I am proud of you, class of 2013, because you have persisted and grown through those first tentative moments of orientation. I have confidence in your success, because during your time here, you have demonstrated the most valuable quality of liberally educated individuals, the ability to adapt to and drive change.

Because of the experiences you have shared, Keene State College has achieved as well:

- Keene State College is listed in the top tier, as one of the leading colleges in the North by the US News & World report for the past four years.
- Keene State has been named to the President's Honor Roll for Community Service
- The Princeton Review named Keene State as one of the most environmentally conscious Colleges in the nation, and this year we were honored by the US Environmental Protection Agency

I hope that you will always be proud of your College and recognize that your diploma reflects its achievements.

Let us use this occasion to recognize those who supported you in your development. Remember the faculty, advisors, coaches, supervisors and staff who guided you on your journey. And, we would be remiss to not acknowledge the efforts, sacrifices and dreams of your families and friends, and the moms who you will honor tomorrow. Through it all, your struggles and triumphs have been theirs as well.

I would also like to acknowledge a member of the Class of 2013 who passed away - Tyler Smith. Though he is not with us today, he is in our thoughts and remembered on our wrists.

Graduates, continue to make your dreams come true. And remember that Keene State will always be here for you.

Thank you.