

Commencement Speech, May 28, 2006
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Co-President

Good morning. A little over four years ago now, I was kept home from school by my mother. She told me that she would not let me go to school until I made my decision about which boarding school I would attend the following fall. Though I remained at home for a little over an hour, it only took me about five minutes to make my decision. St. Mark's School, in Massachusetts, had been my first choice for two years. At around nine o'clock that morning I gave Mrs. Zendt a call telling her I would be attending St. Andrew's the following fall. I am not sure what changed my decision over the course of that five-minute span of time from about 9:00 to 9:05. I do know my decision to come here was one of impulse and last-minute pressure. I do not think that it was a coincidence that I ended up choosing St. Andrew's. I think my heart was telling me all along that St. Andrew's was the right place for me. There was something about the energy of this school that had captivated my subconscious for quite some time.

After living here for four years I know why I made my decision. I could feel from the very beginning that St. Andrew's had a warmer atmosphere than any of the other schools I visited. Four years ago, it seemed like a comfortable place for good reason. This School is a place that will inevitably be a part of me for the rest of my life. There is something about the School that is unavoidably attractive. I am reminded of a story my close friend Andrew Devlin ['06] told me a little over a month ago when I asked him what I should write this speech about. He told me about an experience he had this summer with a couple of guys from the class of 2005. Devlin, Chike [Lawrence-Mitchell '05] and Grayson [Lauffenburger '05] were driving by the School on Route 1 with no intention to stop. As they got closer, they were drawn in, and they felt obligated to, at the very least, drive on to campus. As Devlin put it to me later, no matter how often you complain about your time at this School, it is impossible not to acknowledge its amazing influence on your life. There is no way you could ever simply pass by the campus without stopping. This has been my home as well as the home of my classmates for the last four years. You cannot simply deny the influence a home and a family has on your life. It is the same energy

that brought me here that will keep me coming back for years to come. It is an energy of genuine comfort.

To illustrate the influence this School has had on my life, and the lives of my friends and classmates, I will talk about my plans for the future. Since the beginning of this year Mac ([McCallum '06], who has been one of my closest friends, and I have been planning on coming back to teach and work in admissions for at least a year. Although I am ready to move on to the place in the sky they call college, I know that I will miss this place dearly. I would not be able to leave today if I knew I could not return. This warmth and energy I have been referring to is too persuasive to handle. It will keep me coming back. In fact, Mac now proclaims he is going to simply skip college and come back to work next year.

Much of this communal energy comes from the relationships you build with your friends and the moments you endure with them. Whether it be starting a six-hour full-school water balloon fight one sunny spring day freshman year; or having one of your friends accused of accosting your roommate in a bizarre, late-night experience sophomore year; or surviving the demands of a rigorous junior spring; or finally, lying on the grass docks until sunrise, together with your friends, two nights before you graduate - these shared experiences create lasting relationships with classmates that could not exist anywhere else. These experiences are essential to life and they allow us to grow. St. Andrew's has made all of these moments and challenges possible. It is moments like these that give St. Andrew's such an amazing energy.

Though the experiences I just mentioned were powerful, no moment can top the feeling our class is feeling right now. We are ready to move on together. We all have a unique story to tell and a unique view of this place, but nobody here can deny that we have accomplished something great. It is truly a bittersweet feeling. We are left feeling relieved that the struggle is over, while at the same time we feel as though we have not had enough time together. It is the same feeling one gets when one wins a huge game, completes an art project or turns in a exhibition paper. It is a feeling of triumph with a twist of emptiness that marks the end of a challenge. However, I think we all know that the real challenges are just beginning. After all, in another four years, most of us will be in the real world. St. Andrew's has provided us with a nourishing environment so that

we could prepare ourselves for our coming lives. Well, we have been nourished and it is time to move on to something bigger. I know we are all ready.

I know we are ready, because the energy that exists at this School is an energy that our class exudes. We are a strong class, full of individuals who can think for themselves. It is tough to cite a moment where a member of our class gave in to social pressure. We can stand on our own and we can lead. We are a driven group of individuals who love challenges whether they be academic, artistic or athletic. We are deep and reflective thinkers who are able to grip the reality of the world. Every member of our class is sincere and compassionate. There is no denying that we will go on to do great things in our lives.

Finally, as I analyze my own time at St. Andrew's, I cannot help but think of a piece of advice my mother always gives me. She says, you should not love something because you need it; rather you should need something because you love it. Well, I am confident in saying that I need St. Andrew's in my life because I love it here. But, more importantly, class of 2006, I love you guys. Thank you for the great times.