

Gbemi Olarewaju '24 Convocation Speech

Good morning faculty, staff, families, and students; welcome to a brand new school year! As you may know, my name is Gbemi Olarewaju, this year's student body president. It is my honor to be speaking to you all today, and it's especially heartwarming to be standing next to Dr. Crafton during her first official Convocation as Head of School. On behalf of the students, we are so excited to welcome you to this new position and cannot wait for the journey that lies ahead of us.

This may be your first, fifth, or last Convocation, shout out to my senior class of 2024, but nonetheless, it's time to start a new chapter, and I'd like to give you some words of advice.

The popular internet acronym YOLO stands for you only live once. People are always telling you to take risks, step outside of your comfort zone, and that life can be so short and unpredictable. Hashtag YOLO, right? The advice is obviously tried and true, so I've decided to give YOLO a deeper meaning. Let's break it down.

Y for yearn. Yearn for new experiences. Embrace the unknown and open the door of discovery that unlocks new learning, inspiration, and personal enrichment. Use these experiences to challenge your perspectives, be comfortable with the uncomfortable, and stimulate your creativity. Break the boundaries of your normal routine to experience the world and create lasting memories this school year.

O for outlook. New school year, new you. With an optimistic outlook, the world can become a place full of possibilities and hope. A conscious choice to always put your best foot forward will empower resilience and spread warmth. Now I'm not guaranteeing sunshine and rainbows, but the power of positivity can certainly go a long way. If you set a goal for yourself, believe you can achieve it. Focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

L for laugh. Laughter radiates positivity, dissolves burdens, and is a natural healer. Whether you have the quietest or funniest cackle in the room, laugh on the playground during recess, during Middle School House challenges, or during the Spirit Week pep rally. Surround yourself with things that put a smile on your face and, most importantly, make you happy. As my Aunty Areen says, find what gives you light amidst the darkness. Relish in the little moments; they don't last forever.

O for overcome. Challenges are inevitable. Sometime this year, something difficult will arise. There might be a word on a spelling test you don't know, a riff in one of your friendships, or you might just simply make a mistake. Regardless, you will persevere. Take these challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. Weather the storm, and come out stronger on the other side. You'll thank yourself for it later.

YOLO: yearn, outlook, laugh, and overcome. Almost as catchy as the original phrase. With all of that being said, I'm so excited for this new year, and I wish each and every one of you the absolute best of luck and utmost success. As the famous Latin saying goes, carpe diem. Seize the day. After all, you only live once. Thank you, and welcome back!