

Webb Stays With You | Senior Blazer Day Speech 2023

Good afternoon seniors and Webb community. I want to thank the Alumni and Development department and Headmaster Ken Cheeseman for having me today. I also want to take this opportunity to publicly thank all of the teachers who shaped me, gave me confidence to boldly follow my dreams and still cheer me on. I'm confidently standing on this stage right now in large part because of their wisdom and guidance.

I'll be honest with you, I usually don't read my speeches because I like to speak extemporaneously and Webb prepared me well for speaking in front of crowds. However, I tend to be a bit wordy and if I went off script, we may be here for an hour.

I'm honored to be here with you today to celebrate Sawney's birthday and one of the most important milestones in your Webb career. I remember sitting on this stage anxiously awaiting my blazer in 2011, knowing I was one step closer to graduating and leaving what became my second home.

Today I want to share a few things with you that I've reflected on over the years since graduating from Webb.

First, this blazer is a symbol of everything you've learned here and that you're nearly ready to go make your mark on the world. You are participating in one of our longest-standing traditions and joining decades of alumni who received this blazer.

Each time you wear it, you're wearing our motto, "Noli Res Subdole Facere" - do nothing on the sly. It is a physical reminder of the honor, integrity and character

instilled in you here at Webb. These values will guide you and serve as a beacon as you navigate your career, relationships, and gray areas of life. One of my core memories from Webb is L.R. Smith reminding us that when you take everything else away, you'll always have your character and integrity.

Your time on campus may be coming to a close but you are about to go out into the world and become a representative of the Webb School in your new communities. What you've gained here is timeless and your leadership is needed more than ever. Whether you are wearing this jacket or not, represent our values well and lean on them because Webb stays with you.

The next thing to take with you is what's surrounding you right now: community. When I graduated, I remember thinking, "How lucky am I to be graduating with 57 friends?" and after going to college, starting a business and living all over the country, I was indeed lucky. A community like this one is one of a kind.

Despite your differences you've navigated this transformative experience as a collective. You've grown up and learned how to be compassionate, mindful, and driven individuals together. It's also very likely you've been through some things during your time here and that only strengthened your bonds with your fellow classmates and teachers.

I want to tell you a quick story about something that happened while I was at Webb. When I was a sophomore, my dad unexpectedly had a stroke late one night. It was 11pm and we were at the hospital until the early hours of the morning. My mom offered for me to stay home from school, but I refused. There was no other place I wanted to be with my Webb family. This community held me through that

season and each one since. In fact, one of my very best friends, Jami Averwater, just officiated my wedding in October. The bonds I created here are deeper than nearly any other relationships I've developed since then because they were forged in this collective experience and rooted in a deep care for one another.

It is bittersweet to realize you'll be going your separate ways soon. You've developed friendships here that will last a lifetime but only if you make an effort, so be the one who reaches out. Make the call, send the text, and when you're ready, come back to Webb at reunion. Remember, this community has your back now and they'll continue to have your back because Webb stays with you.

Third, keep your feet on the ground. When things feel chaotic and you're not sure which way to turn, stay grounded in truth. Remember what you've been taught here. Find something you can anchor yourself to, find people you can trust and confide in. And trust that your experience here will guide you towards a better path because Webb Stays with you.

Finally: I've talked about preparing you for what's next but your time on campus isn't over yet. Use this time to strengthen your friendships and connect with someone you may not be close with. Value this time to soak up wisdom from your teachers and thank them for sharing their knowledge with you. And take this time to be present, to document and enjoy these last days to their fullest.

Today we acknowledge that you're nearly ready to explore your next chapter. Until then, cherish this chapter because Webb stays with you and if you're like many alums you'll look back on these years as some of the best of your life.

Seniors, before you step on this stage and accept your blazer, I'm going to ask you to close your eyes. Think of everything that brought you here, all of the challenges you've overcome, all of the celebrations and accomplishments. Think of all the friendships you've built and the support that surrounds you. Think of the beauty of this place where you come to learn each day and the memories you've made here on campus. The community you feel around you now never goes away despite distance or schedules because Webb stays with you.

Now you may open your eyes.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to be here with you today.

On behalf of all the alumni, congratulations on this important milestone in your Webb career.

--Colleen Kerbo