Brian Cal-Mallo ’25, ’26 MBA was the student speaker at the Commencement ceremony held on May 10, 2025. Cal-Mallo, a Manchester, New Hampshire, resident earned a Bachelor of Arts in graphic design with a business minor. His address, titled “Finding Our Place, Creating Our Purpose,” appears below in full.

My place, my purpose.

On my first day at Colby-Sawyer, I stood outside my dorm room, feeling the weight of uncertainty. As a first-generation college student, I could not shake the thought, *Am I really supposed to be here?* I was stepping into unfamiliar territory, unsure of what the next four years would bring. What I did not realize then was Colby-Sawyer was going to give me more than just an education. It was going to help me find my place and discover my purpose.

As Robert Frost wrote:
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

I remember those first moments vividly — being greeted by the upper-class orientation leaders and RAs who welcomed us with warmth and enthusiasm. They showed us a glimpse of what it meant to be part of this community. In a full-circle moment, many of us eventually stepped into those same roles, offering the same support and guidance to the next group of students. Little did we know these roles would shape us. They would give us the energy, optimism and resilience we would need to get to this moment.

But “belonging” was not something that happened overnight. It was built through moments of challenge and growth — moments when we had to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Whether it was pushing through late-night study sessions, stepping outside of our comfort zones in class or leading a club, we learned to take risks and to trust the process.

My place, my purpose.

Somewhere along the way, we discovered something unexpected: the generosity and care that surrounded us. Our class cared. We cared about each other, about our community and about making a difference. That care showed up in the relationships we built, the opportunities we embraced and the memories we created together. And it is that care, rooted in empathy and resilience, that has shaped us into who we are today. Who will ever forget things like climbing Mt. Kearsarge together when the bell finally rang, the fun of wacky bingo and all the new lifelong friends we have met? Not me.

My place, my purpose.

Preparing to take these next steps, we are not just stepping into the future. We are shaping it. Because the world does not need more people who play it safe. It needs leaders who are willing to be uncomfortable, to ask difficult questions and to challenge the status quo. As the world order appears to shift minute by minute, we need people and leaders willing to find their place, their purpose.

As Nelson Mandela said, “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” Over the last four years, we have learned that what once seemed impossible has become our reality. Whether it was finding belonging, overcoming challenges or discovering our place and our purpose. We are now stepping into a world that needs not just leaders, but listeners. It needs changemakers who are ready to make a difference.

This is our place, our purpose.

Of course, our time here was not always about taking risks and finding purpose. Some of our greatest lessons came from unexpected moments, like learning that you can submit a paper at 11:59 p.m. and still be OK. Or discovering that caffeine and ambition can fuel a last-minute assignment. Let us not forget the

friendships forged over late-night pizza runs and group projects that somehow came together just in time.

As I look out at all of us today, I see more than a class of graduates. I see a group of individuals who have learned to lead with heart, lift others up and face challenges head-on. We have become a reflection of the values that Colby-Sawyer instilled in us: integrity, service and a commitment to making the world better than we found it.

Our place, our purpose.

We stood by each other through uncertainty, celebrated victories big and small, and leaned on one another when the path ahead was unclear. Now, as we prepare to take our next steps, we carry those lessons with us. We are not just stepping into the future; we are shaping it.

But this moment is not just about looking back. It is about asking ourselves what comes next. How will we use what we have learned and who we have become to make a difference? How will we continue to create a world where everyone belongs?

As we leave Colby-Sawyer, we do not leave this community behind. We carry it with us — with us in the way we lead, the way we serve and the way we continue to show up for one another. So, let us go out there not just chasing success but building something meaningful. Let us be the leaders, innovators and changemakers that Colby-Sawyer has prepared us to be.

Stepping into this next chapter, we remember that the future is not something that happens to us. It is something we create together. And if these past four years have shown us anything, it is that we are more than ready to take on that challenge.

Congratulations, Class of 2025. I know that what we have learned and experienced at Colby Sawyer College will lead us to find our next place, next purpose!