Sophie Perdro, a nursing major from Scituate, Rhode Island, was selected to be the senior Commencement speaker. Her 2026 address titled "More Than a Place" appears below in full.

In just a few moments, we'll walk across this stage one by one. We'll be called out individually. Our diplomas will carry only our names.

And yet, nothing about this journey was ever individual. This was *never* a one-person story. So, standing here now, alone, feels a little unusual. Because this moment is bigger than any one person could ever represent.

Today is about more than just one voice, and Colby-Sawyer has always been more than just a place.

We didn't just love Colby-Sawyer because of the dining hall.

We loved it because of just how many hours we somehow managed to waste together there. The laughter that carried across tables and the conversations that stretched far longer than the meals themselves.

We didn't just love Colby-Sawyer because of Sally Shaw Veitch Field.

We loved it because of what happened when we stepped onto it, together. The games we won and the challenges we overcame. The grit and resilience we showed, as teammates, as friends, as a family that pushed each other to be better, every single day.

We didn't just love Colby-Sawyer because of places like Colgate Hall or the Schaefer Center, the library or Hogan Sports Center. Not even the beloved Victor's Café. And as much as we *lived* for sunny days on the Quad, it wasn't that either.

We loved this school because of the people who filled those spaces, walked the halls and made them our own. Like the friend who sat next to you on your first day, then became your roommate, and someone who made even an ordinary Wednesday feel extraordinary.

The coach who took a chance on you and, in doing so, gave you more than just a chance to play; she gave you a chance to play with people who meant more than the game ever could.

The professor, who may just be the reason you're here today, now witnessing the moment they helped make possible. The people aren't just part of the story; they are the *reason* the story exists in the first place.

And if we ever begin to believe that we've built our lives entirely by ourselves, we will have forgotten something *essential* about being human. To be human is to need one another. We're shaped by each other, whether we realize it or not.

I'm not here to tell you what comes next. I can't offer advice about a place I've never been, to a room full of people whose journeys I may never fully understand.

No matter the path that brought you here or the ones that lie ahead, today brings a *simple* truth into focus. The role people play in our lives, and the role we play in theirs. Yesterday, today, and in every moment that begins when we leave this room.

Who is beside us will *always* matter just as much as *what* is in front of us. And part of what makes this place so special is not just *what* we studied or *where* we studied, but *who* we studied beside.

Because in the end, degrees open doors, but *people* change lives. So, as we leave here and step into whatever comes next, remember this: Life is, and always has been, about people. And that connection doesn't end here. It doesn't end when we start careers, chase dreams and build futures. Our lives will *always* be shaped by those around us.

May we never forget the people who helped us get here, and may we become the kind of people who help others get where they are meant to go.

Because it's not just about what we do. It's about who we do it with and who we do it for. And the truth is, I can't stand up here to give a speech about the importance of people without acknowledging the very ones who made me believe it so deeply.

So, to my family, both the one that raised me and the one I've found here, thank you for *everything*. And to all the other families and friends in this room, and to the proffers, coaches and mentors of all kinds, thank you for loving and supporting the people I've had the privilege of walking beside.

Because by pouring into them, you helped shape every single one of us into who we are today. We didn’t just love Colby-Sawyer for where we were; we loved it for who we became together.

Class of 2026, congratulations. We did it.