President Dean G. McCurdy's remarks at Commencement 2026 appear in full below.

The Commencement ceremony and its rituals provide an opportunity to reflect on your journey to this point and to look forward to your next steps. Today, we celebrate Colby-Sawyer's history, we honor those whose service and leadership exemplify its values, and we anticipate the promise of your bright futures.

One of Colby-Sawyer's traditions is to ask the Jack Jensen Award recipient, the college's highest teaching honor, to offer the Commencement Address. This tradition exemplifies the transformative power of the relationships between our students, faculty, and staff. We look forward to hearing from Professor Brandon Arvesen shortly. You will also hear from two student speakers, Sophie Pedro, representing undergraduates, and Jeff Larson, representing graduate and professional studies students.

As your president, however, this is my last chance to impart some words of wisdom.

Like many of you, I spent hours last month watching with awe as we received images and stories from the Artemis II mission, as four astronauts left Earth and traveled around the far side of the moon before returning home nine days later.

The Artemis mission made me think of you, and of the importance of a Colby-Sawyer education. I thought about how Colby-Sawyer's tagline, "Explore. Connect. Make a Difference," could have been the tagline for the mission.

The Artemis II astronauts' exploration included lunar surface observations and health studies as they traveled farther from Earth than any humans before them. They connected with each other, and with people around the world — even during the 40 minutes their Orion spacecraft was out of radio contact as they passed behind the moon.

And they certainly made a difference by advancing our understanding of space, testing technology, paving the way for future missions, and bringing hope to people at home.

The kind of education you receive at Colby-Sawyer, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences, also contributed to the success of the Artemis II mission. Without question, the expedition was a remarkable achievement of science, math, and technology. But it wasn't only that.

The architects behind that mission had to navigate politics and finance to secure funding. They had to consider the psychological implications for the astronauts taking part. They drew on knowledge from the health sciences to ensure the astronauts were conditioned and prepared for the journey.

And for all of us watching, their instructions to the astronauts on how to take and process the photos from space were essential. It's not only how we saw the moon that mattered, but how it helped us see ourselves. The imagery of our moon, like a college education, fills us with wonder and inspires us to dream bigger.

And now, Class of 2026, it is time for your next moonshot!

You've studied hard in your own field and learned lessons from many other fields. You have shown that you can synthesize questions and overcome challenges through internships, clinicals, and Capstone experiences.

You will leave here prepared to take these experiences and friendships into the next chapter of your life, and I know you will use them to do things that, so far, you may only have dreamed about.

We, your staff and faculty, are honored to have been part of your journey. We are excited for what comes next for each of you, and we will all be here, still connected, cheering you on from our college on the hill. Congratulations!