

Matilde Robbe
2026 Valedictory Address

Good evening everyone. Thank you so much for joining us tonight; it is truly an honor to be speaking at such a momentous occasion.

For most of my preteen years, I was fascinated by this law—well, it's more of like a principle, but nonetheless; it's called Murphy's law, and for those of you not familiar with it, or the movie *Interstellar*, it goes something like this: everything that can go wrong will go wrong.

It's quite the optimistic outlook on life. And in the last 4 years of high school, I have found that this law is often right. Whether it be that AP Lang Modes essay that almost got destroyed by a rainstorm minutes before I had to turn it in or the saxophone that broke in the middle of my first concert here, the worst possible mishaps happen at the most inconvenient times.

So why do we not wave the white flag? Why do we not surrender while we're ahead? Why do we not save ourselves the headache of even trying, knowing there's so much risk?

I mean, there's not just risk in starting a business or following wild dreams. There is risk in everything we do every day. Even stepping out of the house, and yet we still do it. So why?

In part, I think it is due to human stubbornness. The more that one tells us that we can't do something, the more eager we are to prove them wrong.

Second, it is because we know that nothing is truly impossible. I mean, after 8 *Mission Impossible* movies, where they very much achieved the mission, I think we could figure that anything's possible—it's just really, really hard. And so we try to do it, against most of the odds. Maybe even all of them.

And thirdly, and I think most importantly, it is because we know that everything we do is with purpose. Yes, even those hours that we spend doing nothing. Everything we do, whether productive or not, serves a purpose to make us who we are, serves a purpose, to cumulate into the humans that we are today. The humans that then work towards bigger, wilder goals.

We all hope—deep down, no matter how much we may refute it—to leave a mark, a legacy, not merely in the posthumous charities, funds, or names on a building. Those *are* wonderful marks to leave, but it can truly be something as short as a fleeting smile. And that is legacy enough. It doesn't really live on in stone after you die, but somewhere buried in the

person's memory, they know that you made them smile. It is the imprint we leave that matters the most. Realistically, how many of us would be sitting here today if we knew that all the work we've ever done could never be put forth toward a greater purpose. Some of us might still be here for the love of learning, and that is a respectable art in itself, but deep down, we do things because we want to do something greater in the end. We want to be part of something greater, whether it be our career, relationships, the good we put out in the world, so that those hours we spend laboring may be proof that we are more than a bag of bones.

And so as we go off to college, I can't tell you that Murphy's law will magically stop applying, that things will magically be easier. And telling ourselves that others have it worse may put our struggle into perspective, but it doesn't make it any easier—it can only, perhaps, make it more worth pushing through. In these next years, we have the chance of a lifetime: the beginning of our young adult lives. Whether college is just the 1st step or a bigger door opening, it is a risk that is far more worth taking than anything else. So keep pushing through. Keep trekking onwards.

Thank you all for being with me on the journey so far— my peers, my teachers, my mother and father, Mamie, Papi, Nonna, Nonno. My friends who have toiled through these last four years with me; I thank you all. And may we push through, so that everything that can go right can go right may go right. But maybe for good measure don't go submitting any papers at 11:58 the day they're due.