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2020 Delmer Dewey/Julia McColloch Smith Award Commencement Speech

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Hello everyone, can I get a sco' Wolves? *Sco' Wolves
ahhhh*

First and foremost, congratulations to the class of 2020. Thank you to all our friends, family, faculty, staff, and everyone else who helped us get here. Like many of you, I decided to come to WOU because it was affordable, close to home, and small in size. Little did I know I would be embedded into this diverse, tight-knit community I now call home. This wonderful journey at WOU started with building “forever friendships” with my freshman hallmates playing Sardines, which is like inverted hide-and-go-seek, on countless Saturdays at midnight.

I was involved in many things; I thoroughly enjoyed having my days filled not just with rigorous academics. Aside from school related activities, I spent a lot of time hanging out with friends. From spontaneous road trips with my Honors' Crew, to having BBQs with my Hawai'i family, to living and travelling with my best bud Ming. All the opportunities at WOU allowed me to further develop myself as a person and leader, and find a job directly related to my future all while having fun and making memories. Though my days were packed, my stress relievers -like intramurals and club sports — kept me balanced and on track.

What were some of your stress relievers? Whatever comes to mind, carry them with you because life is bound to get tough again, but you will always be stronger than anything life throws at you. As a full time student working a few jobs, participating in organizations, and somehow getting 7-8 hours of sleep almost every night, college taught me that time is abundant. Some of you may be thinking “is she nuts?” or “wow we must have different clocks!” But really, when you take a look back at all the things you've done, you'll notice how much you can fit into each day. College also taught me to never let an opportunity go by. It may never come again. It

may not be at the time or in the form you were hoping for, but if you take it, you're bound to gain something that will help you later in life.

No one person or small group of people can speak on behalf of an entire graduating class. We've each had our own unique journey at WOU. Whether you worked 3 jobs, participated in organizations, or had a family to take care of, WOU played a huge role. It served as a home, an outlet, or a sea of opportunity for us.

I surveyed some of my classmates and asked “What 5 words come to mind when you think about WOU?” and “What impact has WOU made on you?” I want this speech to embody our collective graduating class as closely as possible. What do you think the most common word to come to mind was? COMMUNITY! Some other recurring words included supportive, growth, affordable, diversity, and opportunity. Every response was distinct, but they all implied WOU provided opportunities for discovery as a student and person, in addition to forming incomparable connections and relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. As for my favorite word response? Squirrels! Even though it reminded me of my unsuccessful attempt to capture Chester the squirrel, which was my first failure of many in college.

I'm sure we've all had our fair share of failures, adversity may have been the force that pushed you to this point — becoming college graduates at this very moment. The time has come to use what we've learned from our successes and failures coupled with our adventures and experiences to make a difference! Let's give a big THANK YOU to WOU for providing this journey packed full of experiences that make you who you are. Now, it's time to celebrate your accomplishments and where you are headed. *pull party popper* Sco Wolves!!!