

Tyler Cadorette, Student Speaker  
Lyndon State College Commencement, 5/15/2016

Hi everyone! Thank you all for being here today. First off - to my fellow graduates - congratulations on making it to this point. I know firsthand how much time, energy, and the occasional sanity-questioning it takes. Ultimately, I think we can all agree that it's worth it.

I want to stress how much of an honor it is to be standing up here today addressing all of you. The fact that I get to speak on behalf of so many wonderful people in this audience is incredibly special to me. In many ways, I think my Lyndon story closely mirrors that of many others. When I arrived here for fall kickoff weekend in August 2012, I was TERRIFIED. I didn't know a single person. I couldn't tell the difference between Darling Hill and President's Hill (for those of you in the audience who are still unsure, I highly recommend both for stargazing if you get a chance). Simply put, I was set on navigating the next four years as quietly as possible, without getting involved, so that I could grab my diploma and move right along. How completely wrong I was.

Let me be clear - deciding to come to Lyndon State was the BEST decision I've ever made. Honestly. Joe, that'll be \$25. This place has become my home. And I'd like to think I've come a long way from the scared high school graduate who wandered onto campus four years ago with my key lanyard safely around my neck. Thankfully I have a nice ID card to remind me never to do that again. High school seniors in the audience, take note. You'll thank me in September.

I like to think it's impossible to navigate Lyndon without making an impact. In this community, everyone's voice matters. That's what makes it so special. We're a compassionate, caring, tight-knit group. Very few colleges have the privilege of being able to say that. In many ways, Lyndon is the biggest family any of us will ever know. This community is like no other.

I point to a few examples. Several weeks ago, a few of us from News7 had to stay up here for work during Easter weekend. I was disappointed I couldn't make it home to see my family and friends in Maine, but all of us here at school decided it would be a good idea to spend some quality time together and make a friends-family dinner. At first, there were three or four of us, then a few more people showed up, and a few more after that. By the time we sat down for dinner, there were probably a dozen people crowded around the table. And the best part? I didn't even know some of them. But there we were... laughing and joking and enjoying each other's company. Not your traditional holiday family dinner, but it seemed especially fitting for Lyndon. And, honestly, it was wonderful.

Of course, with any close community, you're there for each other through the highs AND the lows. Friend-family dinners and other fun milestones mark the highs... but many of us here today have also had to lean on each other during difficult times. Last year... Lyndon unexpectedly lost five students and a longtime staff member in a span of months. It was an incredibly painful time for so many of us - myself included. I wear this purple pin today in honor of my friend - Holly Cannon - who I wish could be here with us. However, out of the loss... this community learned a very valuable lesson. We were all there for each other. Everyone reached out and supported one another. Simple gestures - a warm hug, a comforting text, faculty and staff who went above and beyond in their roles to allow us grieving students time to process what was happening. Sad, but very moving. That strong community feeling never left this campus. I don't bring this up to harp on those painful times, but instead, to illustrate just how compassionate Lyndon can be. It helped me immensely - I think I speak for many others when I say that.

Those who know me well know that I'm a BIG fan of motivational quotes. \*I can practically hear the groaning coming from the EJA section at this point.\* But in all seriousness, my favorite quote of all time seems fitting for the occasion. "Life's about the journey, not the destination." It's the simple truth. We're all walking out of here with degrees today, but those degrees don't define our Lyndon experience. They were the destination all along,

but it's the journey that we'll carry forward. It's our relationships... our memories... and our contributions that stick. It's late night heart-to-hearts with your best friends... the sunrise hikes up Burke (minus the Q these days)... the camaraderie of a newsroom that just broke the biggest story of the year. Those are a sampling of mine - I'm sure collectively we could come up with thousands.

Going forward, there are so many open doors on the horizon for all of us. Some will take us far away from Vermont, while others will lead right back to Lyndon's backyard. Wherever you go, whatever you, whoever you do it with - take the LSC message and spread it to others. Remember the compassion that has served all of us so well during our time here. Strive to learn something new every day. Love your community as much as Andrew Baughn loves the green and gold. Take chances and embrace what scares you - much like many of us did not so long ago when we ventured up here to attend school in a place called the "Northeast Kingdom" or "almost Canada," depending on who you talk to. Dance like it's Thursday night every night - BUT remember those early Friday commitments. Do what makes you happy. Most importantly, take stock in the journey. Ultimately, that's the fun part.

Now, one last thing before I go. I want to take a second to say thank you. To all of my peers and friends, the incredible faculty and staff members who are here today, the community members who have supported us along the way, and all of the loved ones who, no doubt, played a major role in all of us getting to this point - thank you. Thank you for being the second family I never knew I needed... and one I couldn't imagine my life without now. That's the Lyndon difference. That's something we'll carry with us forever.

Best of luck with everything going forward. I have no doubt we'll go out and change the world.