

President Núñez Commencement Charge to Graduates
May 17, 2022

This is the 15th Eastern Connecticut State University Commencement I have attended, and it is perhaps the most special of all. Sometimes it takes the absence of something to which you have become accustomed to truly appreciate it. We have not been here at the XL Center since 2019, and it feels wonderful to be here again with all of you!

I know that our faculty and administrators here in the arena feel as fortunate as I do to be with this year's graduating class and their families and friends this evening.

I hope our graduates and their guests also can feel excitement in the air. It is thrilling to look out at this sea of more than 10,000 Eastern family members and friends. What a way to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of our seniors!

To everyone here tonight who has supported our graduates, thank you for being there for them — tonight and throughout their lives. They have great days coming!

I would like to remind everyone of the incredible journey the graduates have been on the past two-and-a-half years, as they have bravely managed the majority of their college career during a global pandemic. By now you have heard it repeated many times that you are strong, you are resilient, you are battle tested. All that is true. But those days are behind us. I want to focus this evening on what lies ahead.

Tonight is a time for new beginnings. You may not know your next path, or where you will end up. But I encourage each of you to have faith that the values your family has instilled in you, and the knowledge and perspective you have gained at Eastern, will serve you in getting to your next destination. As you trust in yourself, be ready for change — it is inevitable — and be ready to recast your plans. Most importantly, never stop learning. Mahatma Gandhi famously noted, *“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”*

I also ask you to trust in yourselves and the work you have done here at Eastern to prepare for your next great adventure. Steve Jobs, the late founder of Apple, once wrote: *“You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. **So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.** You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”*

Each of you has a dream, talents you were born with. Your Eastern education has honed those talents and prepared you for the world ahead. Grasp your future with both hands.

Be prepared to adjust your grip. Wake up each day committed to grow, to learn more, to make a difference in the world. Do all of this with a smile and the confidence that you can succeed. As Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of New England's greatest philosophers wrote almost 200 years ago, *“Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.”*

We live in a global community today, one that is fragile and in need of leaders like you. I want you to wake up **every day** and **see the best day of the year before you**. Always do your best and God Speed!