

Alexis Everett

Good morning Central Washington University! How are we feeling this morning? I know, I know, early mornings, right? Before we get this show on the road, I have some housekeeping tasks that I need to take care of. First, I would like to know how we got stuck with the morning ceremony? Who's in charge? Because man do I have words for them.... But in all seriousness, it's taken 4 cups of coffee to get me up on this stage.

Alright, now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's focus on what we're really here for. President Gaudino, Provost Frank and esteemed faculty, peers, family and friends, it is my deepest pleasure to welcome you to this year's commencement. My name is Alexis Everett and I am honored to have been chosen to be the student voice. I'll admit, when this opportunity was presented to me, I responded with "Why? Why me?" Am I capable of representing an entire student body and doing it justice? The answer to that question, of course, is no. That's when I realized that to stand before you today, it had to be with my own story, in the hopes that my experiences and the messages they hold, if nothing else, may represent what it means to be a Wildcat.

I got here by learning from my mistakes, jumping in with both feet and figuring it out a little at a time - and I am certain that many of you can relate. I want to give you the short version, the synopsis, of why I am here. You guessed it, I am here because of Greys Anatomy. I always pictured myself becoming a doctor. Not just to save peoples' lives, but because I wanted to wear jammies to work every day, too. How cool would that be? But, half way through my tenure at CWU, I changed my mind. I discovered that my passion for healthcare, once more fully pursued, was leading me in a different direction. I realized that my intentions were true, but my love for

people was deeper, and that my trajectory in the healthcare industry, was not to become a physician, but to impact change through policy. We are allowed to make changes in life. The more we learn, the more we know about ourselves. We are allowed to wake up one morning and say “I want to do something different.” Luckily, my mom talked me out of becoming a snorkel instructor in the Bahamas, so thanks Mom for that. In 3 days, I will be moving to Boston to pursue my Master’s Degree in Public Health. Preparing to move across the country reminds me of my first day at Central Washington University. Part of me screaming out “FREEDOM!” and the other part scared that I may have made a mistake. When I got to CWU, I jumped in, I joined Campus Activities, became a leader, and made connections that will last me a lifetime. I had “that moment” or “that conversation” or “that feeling” that everyone talks about, where all of the sudden, I knew I belonged here. I want to emphasize that there is a difference between making a big decision and making a wrong decision, because initially, they may feel the same.

My time at Central has taught me what I now know to be true; First, I never knew the patience required to find a good parking spot until I came to CWU. Wow, does it make a difference. Also, if you’ve figured out how to get a parking spot in the SURC lot, you are going to make it in life. But besides those things, I now know that I have a deeply rooted passion for people, thanks in large part, to all of you sitting out in front of me, and I hope to pursue a career that will allow me to follow that passion. In the words of Maya Angelou, “I’ve learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance. I’ve learned that you shouldn’t go through life with a catcher’s mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back. I’ve learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision.” I know that the next steps we take as graduates will be scary ones, but don’t worry, we’ve got this.

My time at Central has also taught me what I don't know. I don't know what tomorrow will hold, or what the next ten years of our lives will look like. I don't know how I'll survive without late night Campus U-Tote-Em runs. I also don't know how we got so fortunate to have attended an institution that wants everyone to feel not only at home, but part of the greater wildcat family. I guess you could say we got lucky.

I want you all to remember that it does not matter where you come from, who you love or how you live your life. It is your life to live. Be kind and compassionate, and know that the person next to you has their own story to tell. Respect it. Pay it forward. This is my task set upon you, CWU class of 2018: Take the words of Maya Angelou and see them into fruition. Be kind to others who have wronged you, take every gracious moment given with an open mind and open heart. Otherwise, you may find yourself down a path that does not reflect all you are capable of. We must not waste this gift that has been given to us. Even if you only make a difference in one person's life, that is one less person who doubts their abilities to achieve greatness.

It has been the greatest honor to stand up here and represent the graduating class of 2018. As we leave this chapter and turn the page, don't forget to continuously reinvent yourself. Don't forget to make bad choices and learn from them and make good choices and thrive. It's never too late to be a better you. You've got this. Remember what it feels like to be part of the Wildcat Family; something that is bigger than each and everyone one of us.

Thank you.