

Sawyer Business School  
Suffolk University  
Commencement 2024  
Undergraduate Student Speaker  
Christina Dang, BSBA '24

CHRISTINA DANG: Good morning. I'm Christina Dang, and it is my biggest honor to address my fellow graduating peers, families, friends, and esteemed faculty at today's commencement.

Looking back on the legacy we have built together at Suffolk, I can't help but reflect where we all were four years ago. At the peak of adolescence, with the whole world right in front of us, nervous, eager, and excited to begin a new chapter. Now, four years later, we are all probably a little less eager, a lot more tired, and just about as nervous. Still, the whole world remains right in front of us.

As fulfilling as it may be to celebrate our accomplishments and the present time of graduation, I feel as though we must not neglect the past. Reflect back on your 18-year-old self.

Remember all the late nights, hard work, emotions, college applications, romanticizing your future, senioritis, and college deferrals that ultimately led you to the exact place you were meant to be. I was a wide-eyed teenage girl itching to burst out of my high school class of only 48 people to see the world in color, full of hope to retire my parents from their tedious routines as soon as possible, hit 30 countries by 30, and be the poster child of success, all while starting college.

But as many of you can relate, and to young Christina's disappointment, life isn't a series of checks off your to do list. The biggest comfort, though, through all of these seasons of uncertainty is knowing what is meant for you will always find you. Suffolk University was meant for all of us, and we were all meant for each other.

Before coming here, I thought my identity only consisted of labels like first generation, over achiever, and Asian American. Our identities have been and are constantly being examined by the outsider evolving with time, dealing with existential questions, and specifically as a Sawyer Business School student, having to fit ourselves into 60-second elevator pitches every semester. It wasn't until coming to Suffolk did I realize that these labels aren't my scarlet letters. They are my strengths. I found friends for the first time who look like me and share the same cultural experiences, and witnessed peers who unapologetically show up as their whole vulnerable selves daily. It may be easier for us to hide behind labels of our identity, but we did now survive a whole global pandemic to carry on life timidly. Embrace your identity and grow to surpass your limits.

Now, of all the things I've learned at Suffolk, it has showcased to me the value of privilege. Privilege comes in a multitude of

forms, although each of us is distinctly different, coming from all different walks of life. We all have our own strengths and privileges that come with obtaining a college education. What a privilege it is to trek up the wind tunnels to arrive at Sawyer or Samia every day and bear through the eclectic characters of Downtown Boston, cramming for finals, persevering through courses you thought were impossible. For me it was accounting. Fighting like the *Hunger Games* to get on a Sawyer elevator, or missing the morning train to get to class on time. My fellow commuters, I'm looking at you.

Now of course, the weight of school, work, extracurriculars, and overall responsibilities of life can weigh heavy. But how fortunate are we to have a community like this to confide in. Thank you, Suffolk University, for empowering us to feed our curiosity, develop new skills, and expand beyond our bias. I'm grateful for all the professors and faculty who push and cheer us on the loudest when we succeed, to pillars like our career center, CHW, and even our beloved security guards endlessly having our best interests at heart. I'm grateful for the friends who make the mundane worth celebrating, to the parents who continue to sacrifice their entire lives without hesitation to give us a chance at ours. We thank you deeply.

Suffolk has also granted me the liberty of studying abroad. My sincerest apologies, though, to anyone who knows someone who has studied abroad—as I've heard, it consumes our entire personalities once we've come home. Don't worry, though. I will not be sharing another endless adventure for the thousandth time.

I would much rather highlight how it has shown me that you are your own greatest privilege. Traveling independently for the first time instilled in me that you are your first and longest best friend, your own greatest asset, the one who went and felt through everything they had to, to get to where you are today. Your community may play a supporting role, but celebrate yourself for enduring the most these last four years. Never forget that you have anything and everything you may need relying on yourself.

Looking out at all of you, I see a generation that will innovate, inspire, question, disrupt, give back, and change society for the better. Trailblazers who spread awareness through clubs like the Black Student Union and Arab Student Union, business owners, our record-breaking athletes, and advocates for our communities. Continue creating a more welcoming and conscious reality by sharing your privilege with

others. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Keep turning your inconveniences into opportunities, because your inconveniences are someone else's dreams. And don't settle for what's in front of you.

Now, we've heard relentlessly that the city is our campus. And as of today, the whole world becomes our campus. Moving forward, life no longer centers around an annoyingly long program evaluation, but everything becomes an elective just awaiting your passion. Forgive your past, indulge in the present, and prioritize your future. But most of all, keep making your younger self proud. Thank you. [APPLAUSE]

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