

Sawyer Business School  
Suffolk University  
Commencement 2024  
Graduate Student Speaker  
Cynthia Moore, EMBA '24

CYNTHIA MOORE: Whether you're a friend, family, faculty, board or trustee, Dean Zeng, President Kelly, fellow graduates, know that we gather together today in gratitude for what each of you has done to help us reach this moment in time. It's my hope that what words I impart will help you to build an extraordinary life.

What makes your heart sing?

That was the question I was asked one morning by a barefoot stranger as I lay in a hammock in Jamaica trying to shake away the stress of my corporate job. Up until that point, I had lived a Cinderella story of a career. I was hired at 18 by an investment firm without a degree, and rose to the level of vice president. I was attractively compensated, well incentivized, and respected within my industry. I was also deeply unhappy.

Having lived the childhood experiences of homelessness, hunger, and poverty, as a single mother of two children, my greatest fear was that if I failed, they would relive my childhood. I was driven to overachieve. To find meaning, I also volunteered as a special-education advocate for children with disabilities in the foster-care system. Yet the frenetic pace of it all meant that I had less time for my children, little time for myself, and no

time to envision a different way to live. You see, I was thriving in the game of capitalism, but failing in the game of life.

That question, what makes your heart sing, could not have come at a better time. The answer flowed out of me automatically: Volunteering as a special education advocate. Then why are you not doing that, was his next question to me. Fear was my answer. Naming that changed everything.

When I left the corporate world and went into business as a special education advocate, people thought I lost my mind. Many unexpected benefits came from that decision. The most cherished of these was when my son thanked me for leaving my career, and when he told me he was proud of what I do and how I always help others. I have found joy, meaning, and prosperity as an advocate.

An alum encouraged me to apply to Suffolk's executive MBA program. She knew what I did not, that Suffolk would make my heart sing, too. Suffolk's commitment to diversity goes beyond the traditional. Suffolk also considers those with exceptional careers who do not have undergraduate degrees, and that is how I

stand before you today. Thank you, Suffolk, for your belief in me.

Learning is nothing without taking risks. So it was with the encouragement of Professor Letland and Worthington that I entered both the fall and the spring IP Pitch Contest. I had never pitched before. Truth be told, I wrote the first pitch the evening before the event, and memorized it on the drive into the city. And I came in second. The next event was much different. With the unbelievable help of Professor Joanna Trainor, I practiced for over a month and delivered that pitch from Spain, at midnight, during our global learning experience, and I won. [APPLAUSE] Then came the applied learning. With the help of Suffolk's law clinic, I founded three companies, one of which is my capstone, United To Empower. It will transform the special education industry with technology. I am now poised to help hundreds of thousands of children with disabilities, families who do not have anyone to help them today.

I could not have accomplished any of this without the friendship, wisdom, and support of my Suffolk mentors, fellow EMBA classmates, and friends David Benke and Elaine Rabbit. My heart is filled with song, my spirit with purpose, and my mind with intent. The fear is gone. Naming your fear depowers it.

Having the belief that no matter what you encounter, you will figure it out, empowers you. The benefits you will receive when you are brave enough to do what makes your heart sing are unexpected and will fundamentally shift who you are, how you live, and what you give back to the world. The future is yours. It starts now. Go forth and do what makes your heart sing. Thank you, everyone. [APPLAUSE]