

## CLASS DAY 2020

JUNE 12

### Emily Stevens, Class of 2020

Thank you, Dean Boyer, for the warm introduction and for your leadership during these extraordinary times on behalf of the graduating class. I know I speak for many when I say, we look forward to returning to celebrate in person next spring during alumni weekend 2021 for a memorable weekend marking this major milestone with our class and the alumni community.

I had expected to say “I will miss you dearly” and not “I miss you dearly” but here we are.

It has been an extraordinary four years. I am terribly tempted to quote the first line of *A Tale of Two Cities* “it was the best of times, it was the worst...” but nearly every moment in history sees awful and wonderful running side by side.

The world has become unanchored in a new way. But we know how to row in the doldrums and cut the sails in a storm. We couldn't have gotten here if we didn't.

This class is an incredible group of people. I am honored and humbled to be among you. If you had told me five years ago that my last quarter at the University of Chicago would be online I would have said “there's no way I'm getting in to the University of Chicago.”

As a group you are cleverer, kinder and wiser than I imagined. You have accomplished great things (often laughably astounding great things, the result of superhuman feats of will) and will continue to accomplish great things. And you have failed, with grace and disgrace and fallen down and cried and gotten up again or maybe just laid on the floor for awhile. But we're here now (metaphorically... sorry couldn't resist) on the brink of the future we're creating and I think, whether you know exactly where you're going or not at all, we deserve a moment to rest on our laurels and breathe. We've accomplished something substantial and it will be recognized.

I miss long walks in the bitter cold and empty classrooms in Cobb and the funky smelling basement laundry room and the dear old brutalist Regenstein. These things were taken away too soon but what we have is each other and what can never be taken away from us is ourselves, what we have learned, and who we have become. I am in awe of how we have come together in this time of crisis.

My time at this University has altered the trajectory of my life. I could not have accomplished half of what I have if not for opportunities granted me by Recognized Student Organizations and, indeed, unrecognized student organizations. Students make this place happen.

Here's to you resilient, vibrant, brilliant makers of things and ideas and art and discoveries.

Here's to you who are doing so many things that if you let your eyes unfocus from what's immediately in front of you, you would be overwhelmed.

## Emily Stevens – Virtual Class Day 2020 Speech, First Speaker

Here's to you whose free time and study time is completely unstructured, I read on an Internet forum that you are probably geniuses.

You are bright-burning stars.

This is an insubstantial phantom of the long goodbye we deserve. I hope my admiration is as palpable as any admiration offered in the open air.

To the Class of 2020. Until we meet again.