**Dr. Kristine Young**

**2019 Commencement Remarks**

Graduates, as you anticipate crossing the stage in just a small while, I have confidence that you feel that your investment in your higher education was worthwhile.

A college or university can offer many expertly designed and staffed opportunities to its students. But there are sometimes less obvious opportunities this journey through higher education affords.

One of the challenges of our day, one of the challenges of any day in an educated society, is the contemplation of whether the “good old days” are better than today and whether our today puts us on track for a beneficial and fulfilling tomorrow.

I’ll argue that by completing your degree at Orange County Community College, you have been in the thick of a living laboratory of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Indeed, graduates, if you look back to our first college catalog, 1950-51, you will find these words describing our college’s goal for its very first students:

“…to enable them, in the midst of a complex and rapidly changing society, to distinguish reason from emotion, fact from opinion, truth from error, and having thus arrived at an understanding of the problems confronting them as individuals, and as members of a society, to discover and apply constructive solutions.”

Timeless. Could have been written for the 2018-19 catalog.

Lest you think the students of 1951 were very different than you, think again. If you are graduating us today with a degree in business management or engineering, or if your concentration in the liberal arts is in biology, English, Math, Physics, political science, or sociology, you have a shared experience with Class of 1951.

If you participated in Student Senate, you have a shared experience with the Class of 1951.

If you ever stepped foot in Morrison Hall, you have a shared experience with the Class of 1951.

You’ve all joined a long line of proud and successful Orange County graduates who have been contemplating a complex and rapidly changing society for many decades now.

But the class of 2019’s living laboratory comprises an environment that the Class of 1951 could have never contemplated.

You may have printed something on a 3D printer.

You may be taking your degree in public health or new media.

You may have connected to our WiFi. You may be connected to our WiFi right now.

You may have completed our BRIDGES program.

You may have participated in a Lavender Graduation ceremony.

You may have presented your final class project using a virtual reality headset.

And even if you’ve never done any of those things, you are surrounded by peers who have.

For as long as there have been students at Orange County Community College, there have been faculty and staff. And those faculty and staff have cared deeply about you. Nothing now will please us more than to watch you create that beneficial and fulfilling future. To discover and apply those constructive solutions envisaged as far back as 1951. To troll the “good old days” for the ideas that still make sense and bring them forward into the environment we inhabit today as we simultaneously create that bright future. Think of it as keeping the Class of 1951’s Morrison Hall but having the wisdom, courage, and know how to add both ramps for inclusivity and accessibility and air conditioning for modern sensibilities.

We often talk about the economic multiplier effect that community colleges have on their communities. Tonight, I challenge all those gathered to also talk about the intellectual and good citizenry multiplier effect that community colleges have on their communities. To witness it, just watch these graduates. I guarantee they will make a difference.

Congratulations, graduates. Now, let’s confer some degrees.