

Undergraduate Commencement 2015

- June 14, 2015
- Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.

Welcome graduating students—soon to be alumni—parents, families and friends to this Undergraduate Commencement. Welcome to Key Arena, the home court where Redhawks win, and where you win in a very big way on this day.

What might a balance sheet look like of what has gone on in the world during your college years and what has gone on with you?

During your years in college, global warming has increased and has more inescapably made its presence known. Disparity or inequality, or the gap between the well-to-do and the poor, has widened. More young persons, especially African Americans are in our jails and prisons. Fewer people have affiliated themselves with religions over these years. There is a far greater polarization—a seemingly unbridgeable one—on all levels of our political life. The world is not safer; it is more dangerous. The Middle East has destabilized and has become extremely fragile with new warring parties.

At the same time the means for addressing many of these problems have greatly increased. The knowledge available to all of us has multiplied many times over. New means of communication among us, unimaginable before, have appeared. Scientific and medical skills, discoveries, and applications have grown exponentially. We know a bigger world and we know it better. While religious adherence among the wider population has slipped during your years of college, every survey shows that you are more alert to and prizing of your own spirituality.

These are some of the items I would add up on the balance sheet of your years in college. You would quickly add others which I have overlooked. That's one side of it, more what has gone on in these years outside of you.

But let's consider more fully and carefully what has occurred for you more personally in these college years. You have received and applied yourself to a better education than any previous graduating class: your professors have been of higher qualification; your core curriculum much stronger and more engaging; your interaction with and learning from one another has expanded; the range and specificity of your major, minors, and emphases are much richer. You have had an education to match the challenges of the world. At the same time you have applied this education in practical ways, in service learning, in contacts with a very wide range of people, young and old, of many cultures. Again and again you have brought your education to bear on justice, beyond previous cohorts of students. You are not a dispirited group; you are a hopeful and confident one.

I am confident for two reasons. First, I know you and your depth of commitment, your personal resources of mind, spirit and soul, and what you have and will choose to make of your Seattle U. education. Secondly, I am confident because I believe from your experience of choosing community during these years, you will choose to form communities of support, of commitment,

and of service to others which alone can have the strength to match the magnitude of the challenges we have witnessed in your college years. I am confident that you will now take your university's mission and, in making it your own, you will broaden it to "empowering communities for a just, humane, and sustainable world". Do this with our confidence, our gratitude, our congratulations, and our blessing.