

Commencement 2014 Student Address
Cody Edwards

Fellow graduates, parents of Austin College students, faculty and staff, good morning. My name is Cody Nash Edwards, and I am but one of the many people moving into the next phase of my life today. As senior speaker, I thought I would take a few minutes of your time to tell you a story you know, but may not have heard before.

A number of years ago, there was a group of people here at Austin College the same approximate size as this one, but with a few differences. They were younger obviously, and perhaps a little heavier. They were weighed down with furniture and suitcases and things, and despite this heaviness they were scrambling to get moved into residence halls and set up in classes. Thus installed, these students then bid goodbyes, variously teary and dry-eyed, to their parents and got on making friends with their roommates.

Over the next few years, this group of people changed in small, but important ways. Some people dropped out, new people came in, year upon year. The people in this group we're talking about joined student organizations, they made friends with underclassmen and upperclassmen and women. They took science and math classes in Moody, which is a feat fewer and fewer people will be able to attest to in future. They made friends with their mentors, maybe had student mentors, maybe became mentors themselves. They ate in the cafeteria, and then maybe learned to cook for themselves.

At a certain point this group of people began to focus their studies to one or two subject areas they really liked, and maybe at this point they began thinking of themselves as what they were studying. "I'm a biology major." "I'm an art major but I'm doing a minor in math." Some of them studied abroad. Some of them have already gone beyond Sherman and studied in new and exciting languages, made friends now thousands of miles away.

This group of individuals also watched changes on campus, saw faculty members they knew go, they saw Clyce go co-ed; they saw the very architecture of this place change as the IDEA center sprouted up, all brick and glass and full of promise.

And up until a few days ago, this bildungsroman of youths combating the odds and winning themselves an education was going strong. But now... it's kind of over.

The group of people sitting in front of me is no longer the protagonist of that story. We have transcended mere studenthood in the interests of starting a new story. This ceremony is called Commencement. It is the preface to a story you will write yourself. A story in which you become a lawyer, or a writer, or maybe even president of the United States. And if you've ever tried to write a story, you know that it's tough work. But of course, you aren't alone. Graduating as we are, some [300~400] strong, we make up but a small portion of a tradition of men and women writing their own stories as old as this college, as old as the college system. And if you look around, there are people here in the audience who also graduated from Austin College, some fifty or more years ago. They were here themselves, however many years ago minus four, laden down with furniture and parents who didn't want to say goodbyes. They had home games and all-nighters and iPhones. All right, not that last one. They come to these graduations because they believe in the promise that each and every one of us carries as we assemble on this green to start our new lives as graduates.

If you are a student of Austin College graduating today, spend time with the people who came here to support you. They took your phone calls, they helped you move the mini-fridge, they were and will continue to be a support network as you move away from AC and into the real world.

If you're a parent of a student here at Austin College, I'd like to end by thanking you personally. College is a time of transformation in a young person's life, and the group of talented, educated, smartly-dressed, vigorous, loquacious, intrepid, righteous, magnanimous, rectitudinous, righteous, and eximious graduates sitting before me made these past four years the most influential of my life.