

**VALEDICTORY SPEECH FOR THE 62nd GRADUATION
CEREMONY- 20TH DECEMBER 2019**

Cabinet Secretary

Chancellor of the University of Nairobi

Chancellors of sister universities

Our Chair of Council

Your excellencies, the Ambassadors and high commissioners

Chairpersons of University Councils

Our Vice-Chancellor

Vice-Chancellors of sister Universities

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

College Principals and Senate

My fellow graduands

Our parents and guardians

Staff and Students

Partners of the University

Invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

I am deeply humbled to stand before you with the honor bestowed upon me to speak on behalf of the graduating class of 2019 at the 62nd University of Nairobi Graduation Ceremony.

I would like to begin by expressing gratitude to the university for the chance to join the intercalated program while continuing with my main studies in the School of Medicine and thus manage to achieve a degree within a degree, an opportunity I would not have

been granted in any other university within the region. Through this course I have received mentorship under the leadership of the chairlady, Dr. Pamela Mandela and the accomplished individuals who entail the faculty of the Department of Human Anatomy. I am thankful for the BSc. Anatomy alumni and the MSc students who chaperoned by Professor Julius Ogeng'o, have invested their time and energy into developing my scientific thought process. I'd also love to acknowledge the technical staff who without their patience and expertise I would have not completed my research projects. Without this course I would never have discovered nor built the depths of resilience accorded to me now. I am thankful to all the aforementioned people for instilling in me the hunger for knowledge, the passion to learn and igniting the flame that has set ablaze my own dreams.

I am thankful for the blessing of my mum and dad for without their tough love I wouldn't be here. My sister and brother whose warm hugs have comforted me in difficult times. My housemates and my best friend, who are more like sisters at this point, one of my biggest cheerleaders in this tough year. My classmates who are more giving than any other group of people I've ever known. We had so much fun together. Most of all I am grateful to God for all the blessings he has bestowed on me this year for without him none of this would have been possible.

There was once a young boy who was involved in a devastating car accident where he lost both his parents and his left arm. He was taken in by an old Japanese judo master and thus decided to study judo. After 3 months of training however, the master had only taught him only one move. "Sensei," the boy finally said, "Shouldn't

I be learning more moves?” The master replied, “This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you’ll ever need to know.” The boy did not understand, but he kept training. Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprisingly, the boy easily won his first three matches and was now in the finals. This time however, his opponent was bigger, stronger and more experienced and for a while he was overmatched. The boy began to doubt himself. The referee called a timeout concerned that the boy might get hurt. He was about to stop the match, but the sensei intervened. Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. He won the tournament in a flair of disbelief. On the way home, the boy finally asked the question that has been on everyone’s mind, “Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?” The sensei answered, “You won for two reasons. First, you have mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. Secondly, the only known defense for that move, is for your opponent to grip your left arm.”

This story represents much of the life at university. Just like the little boy had to lose all he had and start a new so did we when we joined this prestigious institution. We had to step out of our comfort zones to make new friends and thus find our tribe, to adapt to a different system, to encounter more challenging aspects of education. Each of us had ‘Senseis’ who held our hand and served as our guiding light through the years, who were tough and insisted on repetition until mastery of a concept, who refused to let us give up when self-doubt crept in, who always saw potential in us. But most of all like the boy’s missing arm, sensei’s who used our biggest

perceived weaknesses as a weapon and thus guided them to be our biggest strength. Therefore, when we acknowledge that we cannot fully take credit for our achievements we are compelled to be humble in our successes and be grateful.

To my fellow graduands, do not fear failure but please be terrified of regret. Outside the cocoon of the university, the consequences will be greater, the stakes will be higher. When we walk out of these gates today into what we call 'real adulting,' we will receive a lot of shut doors, a lot of rejected applications, way more NO's than YES. As St. Josemaria Escriva wrote- there is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of us to discover it. And thus I urge you, when times get tough because they will, get tougher. There isn't a question that will keep you up at night than, "What if I didn't give up?" More importantly, never stop learning because life never stops teaching. I would like to conclude with a quote from Arya Stark of Winterfell: what do we say to fear and self-doubt?-NOT TODAY.

Congratulations class of 2019 for this great milestone!

Thank you,

-BRIDGET NEEMA.