

The Power of Your Education

Chancellor Kristen Sobolik, Provost Dr. Steven Berberich, deans, faculty, family, friends, and most importantly, the Class of 2025. Congratulations on your achievement!

It is my distinct honor to address you all today, on this momentous occasion of your graduation from the University of Missouri – St. Louis, School of Education. As someone who deeply believes in the Power of Education, I am honored to be here with you this evening.

Approximately twenty years ago, I, too, excitedly sat among my class, here on this very campus, waiting for my name to be called. Then, I walked on the stage and proudly accepted my college diploma. It is a day I will never, never forget.

UMSL holds a special place in my heart. As a proud alumna, I believe this great school gave me valuable tools for success. Beyond my degrees, it has helped me realize the responsibility that the Power of Education brings to each college graduate.

I grew up in this neighborhood and was the first in my immediate family to attend college and graduate.

My hardworking parents understood the immense value of an education and instilled its importance in me. I saw their struggles and sacrifices, as well as their resilience and commitment to my success.

Behind every graduate is a story of personal sacrifice. You may have missed special occasions, stretched resources, or had to balance work and school homework while

carrying responsibilities that some didn't know or understand. No one walks this journey alone.

To the parents, siblings, mentors, and other members of your village assembled today, thank you. Thank you for believing in the graduates and for your loving support. This moment is being shared with you, also.

While earning a college degree can provide significant advantages and opportunities, we must remember it is a privilege. And with privilege comes responsibility.

The world faces immense challenges, inequality, injustice, and a growing generational disconnect. As educators, you have a unique opportunity to bridge these divides, promote empathy, and foster a sense of global citizenship.

The world needs your innovative ideas, passion for learning, and unwavering commitment to creating a better future for all.

In the words of the great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr,
It begs the question, "What are you doing for others?"

As you step out into this world, I urge you to think about the Power of Your Education, the privilege, and the responsibility that comes with it.

We have one life.

What is your purpose?

How will you make a difference?

The Power of Your Education can OPEN DOORS, effect change, and make our community a better place – but not on its own. It requires you to step up, take risks, and use your voice. It's a dedicated lifelong commitment to make a difference.

The Power of Your Education will afford you OPPORTUNITIES.

Lean into them.

Seek them out.

These opportunities are stepping stones for success or failure, and you will experience your fair share of both.

Take advantage of your opportunities and soak up as much knowledge as possible.

They will provide you with valuable life lessons.

Use the Power of Your Education to INSPIRE.

All people need inspiration.

Our world needs inspiration.

Build up those around you.

Be respectful.

Practice gratitude.

Stand your ground.

Be empathetic.

Lead by example.

Stay humble.

You will drive transformative changes in organizations, communities, and cultures when you INSPIRE others.

Use the Power of Your Education to REIMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES.

Dream.

Dream big.

Don't be complacent.

Don't settle for the status quo.

Don't be a run-of-the-mill person.

Keep that fire in your belly ignited.

Stay curious and mindful.

Stretch yourself and don't quit.

We all have goals and dreams. Look for ways to do better and be better.

Above all, BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. In our fast-paced, technology-driven world, it can be challenging to weed out the noise, the nonsense, and the nay-sayers.

You have what it takes to be a leader. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Focus on your strengths. Focus on your convictions. Let your passion and motivation drive you to greater heights. Don't let setbacks derail you. Use them as fuel to persevere.

When you believe in yourself, you can achieve anything.

This is an exciting time.

This is your time!

The world is your oyster.

Who will you impact?

What will you achieve?

What will your indelible mark on this world be?

Barbara Jordan, a lawyer, congresswoman, and scholar who fought for civil and human rights, said,

“It is a privilege to serve people, a privilege that must be earned, and once earned, there is an obligation to do something good with it.”

She emphasized that power and privilege should not be used solely for personal gain; they come with the responsibility to improve the world for others.

The UMSL mission states, "We transform lives." Your education from this great institution has truly prepared you.

You are on your way.

Congratulations, graduates from the School of Education! May your journey be filled with purpose, joy, and the unyielding belief in the transformative Power of Your Education.

Your commitment to education is a beacon of hope, and I am confident you will make a real difference in the world.

We are all rooting for you.