

"Take more pauses in life"

Samantha Reynolds Delivers Faculty Address at Honors Convocation

Wednesday, May 17, 2017



SAMANTHA REYNOLDS, LECTURER OF CHEMISTRY AT UNH MANCHESTER, DELIVERS THE FACULTY ADDRESS AT THE COLLEGE'S HONORS CONVOCATION ON MAY 16.

"Those of you sitting here today have accomplished some amazing things in your time at UNH Manchester," said Samantha Reynolds, faculty speaker at UNH Manchester's [Honors Convocation](#) on May 16. "Give yourself the time to acknowledge the work you have done and the pride you feel for your accomplishments. Take the time to absorb your newly acquired knowledge and figure out how it fits in with your world."

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Reynolds, lecturer of chemistry, addressed more than 200 attendees at Tuesday's event, which recognized the academic achievements of more than 130 students. Reynolds encouraged graduates to take time between accomplishments to appreciate all they've learned and achieved, and enjoy the journey.

Reynolds' address reflected the enthusiasm for and commitment to education that earned her this year's [Excellence in Teaching award](#), which recognizes a faculty member who is an inspiring, challenging and effective teacher. Read her full speech below:

"I am so pleased to see so many faces here today, from faculty and staff, to parents, families and friends, and, of course, our amazing students.

I am honored to be recognized for teaching excellence, as it means I've convinced most of my students that chemistry is not scary. It can, and should, be a challenging subject, but not one they should shy away from.

I have always tried to demonstrate to my students that they can break down complex reactions and calculations into smaller pieces, and that there are many themes that they can find throughout an entire year of study if only they take the time to pause, organize their notes, and build those connections.

I've also tried to encourage students to find support from their classmates. This year, I formed my General Chemistry students into small teams tasked with a team test instead of individual quizzes. They came up with creative team names, such as The Chemystery Detectives and Team I-Need-A-Good-Grade, and so many students told me that their team quote-unquote "rocked" during the year.

I began teaching chemistry with the hope that it wouldn't be the most dreaded class on campus, but never expected to

hear students say that they had fun taking a test on thermochemistry, or find out that some of my organic chemistry students felt genuinely sad after our last lecture of the year.

The challenges students have faced in my courses – taking the time to focus on and absorb the material instead of speeding through; and finding support from those around them – are difficult ones to overcome, but they are critical skills to foster, not just in the classroom, but also in the life outside one.

As I stand in front of so many gifted students, I'll be honest that when I started writing this speech, I wasn't quite sure what to say to you. It didn't help that I slept through my own undergraduate honors ceremony - though in my defense, it was held at 8am and I have never been a "morning person". I recall I was in such a whirlwind of completing final papers, attending poster sessions, and preparing grad school applications, that I missed out on taking the time to recognize all that I had already achieved. I learned the hard way that jumping from one achievement to the next without pause can leave you exhausted. Those hours spent writing an essay or preparing an oral presentation may not seem physically demanding in themselves, but when your life moves from one paper to another presentation without a break, the fatigue can add up.

Students, I implore you to make the time over the next few days to lie down and take a nice long nap. You've earned it, and you probably need it.

Those of you sitting here today have accomplished some amazing things in your time at UNH Manchester, and if I can expound on that advice about taking a nap, it would be to take more pauses in life and give yourself the time to

acknowledge the work you have done and the pride you feel for your accomplishments. Take the time to absorb your newly acquired knowledge and figure out how it fits in with your world. The obvious cliché to “stop and smell the roses” is one I’m sure we’ve heard too many times to count, and one that we are apt to shrug off in our fast-paced lives. My husband remarked to me the other day that perhaps the message should be less about coming to a full stop, and more in line with taking your foot off the gas pedal for a moment.

So often we move so quickly from one task to another, that we don’t take the time to recognize all that we’ve learned or accomplished. We punctuate our lives with milestones and deadlines, challenging ourselves to push forward to the next. We can get tunnel-vision, and lose sight of the journey itself, and the enjoyment of being on that journey.

I’m so happy to see all of you taking some time here today to celebrate all that you have achieved so far. As you are poised to embark on your next journey, remember the wise words of one Ferris Bueller: “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

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