As I look around today, I can't help but think about all the events we have attended in this quad over the years: from the Welcome Luau and Viterbi’s Got Talent to E-Week and the Date Auction, and now we are here for our graduation. During our time at USC, we have seen the campus and surrounding community continually grow and change from when we arrived as freshmen, and we have seen some changes in ourselves as well. We’ve made new friends, changed career paths, traveled, and learned more than we ever anticipated in the process.

We initially came to USC for a classroom education (and maybe for the football games) but ended up with so much more. The true learning experience came from more than what we could learn in books or classrooms. I came to USC planning to focus all my energy on school work and to graduate with a job ready to start my life. Fortunately, this school provides so many opportunities I couldn’t limit myself to simply attending classes and studying. Who can say no to the chance to race a concrete canoe or to study in a foreign country? These experiences can only be found at such a diverse engineering school and it is these opportunities that make Viterbi graduates unique.

After fours years in the Viterbi School of Engineering, I have learned that sometimes the greatest experiences come upon us unexpectedly. Sometimes an unbelievable opportunity shows up in your e-mail inbox and you can’t pass it up. I learned that sometimes trial-and-error is the best way to truly understand how something works. There’s no standard for a concrete mix for canoes and computer programming often left us at a loss but we persevered until we were successful.

Viterbi has taught us to be more than just engineers sitting in cubicles. We have been challenged to extend ourselves beyond our comfort zone whether that was through studying abroad, organizing events, or picking up a major or minor in another discipline. We learned to pull all-nighters studying so we could make time for our extracurricular activities. We sacrificed sleep to be more than just engineers.

This school really did provide something for each of us. We all had the opportunity to find our niche and to spend the last four years in the most fulfilling way possible. We all have our own memories of lunches in RTH and late nights in SAL. We’ve been active in organizations in our departments and across Viterbi. We’ve been involved in the surrounding community by renovating houses and teaching engineering skills to younger students. We've participated in research with our professors and classmates. And all of these activities have made us who we are sitting here today.

While the current economic situation has affected many of our post-graduation plans, it has also enticed many of us to return to school. The advantage to the engineering field is that there is always more to learn. And if we are heading into the work force after graduation, we still have the responsibility to continue our learning.

With recent increases in funding for research and education in technical fields, even greater opportunities are now available for us as new engineers. We must take advantage of these changes and use them to make our own impact on the world. As engineers, we are the most prepared to make a difference in the current society, whether it is through teaching others, improving healthcare, or reducing energy usage. It is now our time to make an impact and we are ready for the challenge.
Engineers think differently than most other people and see the world differently. We overanalyze everything and then look for somebody to discuss our ideas with. I have found that some of my best memories with engineering friends are simply conversations that lasted for hours. Our efforts to make sense of everything results in innovations that can improve the quality of life for others.

As Viterbi alumni, we need to pass these memories, ideas, and conversations on to future students. After putting so much time and effort into our studies and activities, we have useful knowledge and experience to pass on. We should make ourselves available to help them get the most from their college experience. And we must remind them of the true spirit of the Trojan family as we have experienced it at countless football games when the band plays Conquest to celebrate yet another victory.

Someone told me the other day that the best engineers know how to roll with anything that is thrown at them. As we move on to the next chapters of our lives, we need to remember to be flexible with our plans and expectations. When we step into a new project, whether in our professional, personal, or academic lives, we need to be open to the unexpected and willing to take on tasks without knowing exactly where they will take us. Exercising this versatility will make us assets in any area of our lives.

As we sit here today, it is also necessary to remember everyone who has helped us succeed over the last four years. Thank you Dean Yortsos for everything you do that makes Viterbi a great engineering school. Thank you to Dean Yates and the entire Viterbi staff for all your support and guidance. Thank you to our professors for the lessons you have taught us in and out of the classroom. And thank you to the families and friends that shared these experiences with us. Finally, thank you to all the Viterbi students for creating these memories and experiences. We challenged each other and encouraged each other. I will never forget the times we have all shared.

Congratulations Class of 2009 and Fight on!