

Families and friends, faculty and administrators, and graduates: I am honored to be here today, representing the 2023 graduating class of Seton Hall Law School. When I was told I was going to be doing the speech at graduation in front of 2,000 people, I was terrified. But then I remembered, I made it through law school—anything is easy in comparison. To the graduates of the MSJ, MLS and LLM program, although I could never accurately represent your experiences, your similarly unique passions and perspectives further add to the dimension of the Class of 2023. I am glad we get to celebrate together.

I don't know how many of you remember Father Nick telling us at orientation that these three or four years will go by so fast. The reason why I remember it so well, was because I didn't believe him... Standing here, I can confirm Father Nick was right. I feel as if 1L year just ended, but somehow, we are all in our graduation regalia, leaving Seton Hall Law. It may have gone by in the blink of an eye, but by no means was it easy. We were challenged and broken down, only to be built up even stronger.

Our three years were characterized by studying, maybe even cramming for exams, enduring cold calls, staying up late and waking up early to prepare for class, securing internships, presenting oral arguments, and the occasional tears. We were challenged on countless occasions, and our minds have been transformed to look at and think of situations differently. For example, a few months ago, my mom slipped in a store and hurt her ankle. My first instinct was to look around and go through the elements of negligence. Don't worry she's fine—she's in the audience wearing heels.

Commencement Speech for the Class of 2023
Sarah Souaid
May 25, 2023

We triumphed over countless case briefs, confusing legal jargon, and those dreaded 3-to-5-hour exams that made us question our life choices. We have emerged from the depths of law school, ready to enter the legal world armed with a strong knowledge base, well-developed legal practice skills, and the finesse to argue any point.

Aside from the inherent and anticipated academic value, the connections we have made over the past few years are the most precious thing we'll take away from this experience. We entered law school during a pandemic; Many of us never had the opportunity to tour the school and we had our orientation via zoom. We took a leap of faith and leaned on one another for emotional support to get us to where we are today. It tested the bounds of friendships as we learned to stay connected while often physically apart, include those who were required to stay home and to accommodate one another other. Even when everyone was struggling to cram for finals, everyone was willing to fill each other's cup in order to succeed. We may not remember everything we learned about the law, but we will certainly remember the friends we leaned on, who held us up, and who patiently got us to where we are today.

We also could not have made it this far without the support of our loved ones. They have been our unwavering support system throughout this journey, providing us with love, encouragement, and the occasional pep talk when we needed it most. They stood by us through thick and thin, they were always there to celebrate our successes and pick us up when we stumbled. So, to our loved ones, I want to say a heartfelt thank you. Your faith in us has been our greatest source of strength, and we could not have made it this far without you.

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As we prepare to embark on the next phase of our journey, we must remember that our work is not yet done, and that we must continue learning. We are not only meant to advocate for and protect clients, but to use our resources and degrees to make conscientious public policy changes. I don't know where each of us will end up, but I have no doubt that each and every one of you is capable of doing extraordinary things regardless of whether you were top of the class, the bottom of the class or somewhere in the middle. We all struggled and triumphed in different ways, but we have all accomplished the same extraordinary thing.

In whatever setting you choose to practice law, focus on your relationships. One day we may be adversaries, however, our Seton Hall Law foundation—OUR CONNECTION—means we will grant each other a little grace in the courtroom, it means we will refer clients, or be there for each other to discuss complex areas of law. Since we all have this collective experience of doing something terrifying, yet extraordinary, our ties will supersede the walls of Seton Hall. I hope we each hold onto the lessons we have learned here at Seton Hall Law School and that we each continue to be passionate, committed, and relentless in the pursuit of justice. We're graduating with the knowledge that we have one another to lean on, support and encourage for the rest of our career.

I did not think this day would come so soon, but now that it has, I cannot believe I can proudly say that we are no longer Seton Hall Law Students, but we are now Seton Hall Law Alumni. May your careers be fulfilling and fruitful! Congratulations class of 2023!

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