

Thank you for taking the shot. I do not know what series of shots were the ones to land each of you in *this* room on *this* morning, but thank you for taking each and every one of them. Luckily, the end of one game marks the start of a new one, and after a while every shot in every game seems to stream together in a way that makes it all continuous. After years of conditioning, practicing, training, coaching, crying, falling, healing, and getting back in the game, here we are.

Good morning to family, friends, faculty, staff, honorary degree recipients, alumni, supporters and, of course, graduates of 2017. Congratulations for making it to the championship game. I would like to think that it is no coincidence that Gosman doubles as both a sports and a convocation center, allowing us to convene on this court. Thank you for allowing me to deliver the last timeout speech of this game.

Here in the fourth quarter, our team is stronger than ever. On offense, we took what was ours. Every night that you stayed home to study, every call made to your family back in your hometown, every submit button pressed on applications, and every assignment handed in (with or without that extension), you were playing offense. From the weekly responses submitted from the free throw line to the 20 page papers that felt a lot more like taking a shot from half court, the fact that we are sitting here this morning says that we averaged fairly well these past few seasons. Many of us will attribute this to the coaching from our families and advisors, the skills taught to us by professors, the support and resources provided to us by various faculty and staff members, and the grace of God. Defense was a little harder to play, yet we rebounded from losses we lost over the years, blocked every weapon that was formed against us, stole back every ball that was rightfully ours, and made a smooth transition back to offense because we play best when we are calling the shots.

We play hard every game, but we play a little bit better and with a lot more heart when we play at home. At home, we are undefeated. I finally realized how we were able to seamlessly accomplish this task. At home, we do not have competition. We all play for the same team. There are times in practice that some of us wear blue jerseys and the rest of us wear gray ones (like the students and professors during finals week), but that never eclipsed the fact that we have a common goal. Here, in this gym, we can think of this final event as May Madness. In this moment, we have a line-up better than the athletes in every all-star game put together. We are a super team that has had years to practice and grow together. I carry Chicago with me everywhere I go and I would like to think I am an honorary Bull at this point, but I am immensely proud of my time spent playing for Brandeis. Brandeis could not have done a better job recruiting and drafting to make this room look the way it does right now.

When you receive your degree in hand, you are officially a free agent. With stats unlike any other, Brandeis has made us the most hard working, conscious, relentless, agile, innovative, and skilled free agents on the market. Rest assured that, as my granny always says, all is well, but there is one guaranteed way that we can ensure our continued success as we transition out of free agency into our next commitment in life. There is one play that incorporates a strategy to make us winners any and everywhere that we go. This play involves making every game played for our next team a home game. Wherever we go, we carry home with us and make it our new home. When we leave the comfort of a place we have grown attached to for years, it may seem difficult to handle every defender attempting to block our shots, but we must never let it make us fearful of playing the game as hard as we have been taught to play. Starting from the southside of Chicago, I took the shot every time the opportunity presented itself, and that ambition has gotten

me here today. With only a few seconds left in timeout, let's end the game strong. Let's take a lesson from Allen Iverson on practice, a few lessons from Russell Westbrook on execution, and a lesson from 1992 Michael Jordan on how to seal the deal. With no competition and a team this solid, we were guaranteed championship rings from the moment we stepped foot on this campus. As the clock runs down, take these words as the set-up for an assist. That way, we all have a hand in the final play. The only difference is that this time we do not take the shot, we rush the middle and slam dunk because we already know we are the champions. Congratulations. Break.