Hi Class of 2020!

My name is Naily, and I'm graduating with a BFA in Art & Technology and double minors in Computer Information Technology and Business Administration. I, like many of you, have been feeling a wide set of emotions during this time. Some good, some bad, but all necessary and natural. I feel like on this day especially, I think it's even more natural to feel pensive and reflective of our experiences at the U of O. Along my journey filled with memories of creating art projects, visiting friends in the MCC, student group meetings, visiting CMAE, attending student group meetings, and all those late night study sessions, I especially reflect on one important thing I've learned, which is *creativity*. Now I can imagine you sarcastically thinking, "Wow, what a surprise - an art student learned about creativity." But I promise you, it's a much broader scope than that. Contrary to what most think, anyone can be creative. In fact, most people are creative, and I guarantee you everyone watching this *is* creative.

Let me show you what I mean by *creative* through an experience of mine.

So, during my first year of college, I really set my mind on studying abroad. I knew I wanted to do Semester at Sea during my sophomore year. However, this program was incredibly expensive. And because I wasn't sure if I would get any study abroad scholarships, I knew I needed to save money somehow. As a first-year student, I wasn't yet accepted into my major, and I didn't really have any developed design skills to be able to get an internship. So I honestly felt pretty stuck, and I wasn't sure how I was going to go about this plan of mine. But one day I was just doing some cleaning, and I stumbled upon my painted graduation cap from high school. I looked at it, and I wondered if maybe someone would be willing to pay me to paint their graduation cap. I didn't know of anyone before who was painting graduation caps, but I figured it couldn't hurt to try. So I made an announcement on social media and I posted an image of the grad cap on an Etsy page. A couple days after I made those posts, someone reached out to me, and a couple days after that, another person placed an order. And it wasn't long before then that would have one order after the next because one person would refer another person to me, and I had friends and family sharing on social media just amplifying my artwork and spreading that visibility - and so, I was super pumped! That graduation season, I ended up painting over 40 graduation caps and I managed to save a few thousand that I could use toward study abroad. This was something that I never imagined before when I first made that initial post.

In this experience, creativity wasn't the painted graduation caps, creativity was me starting a personal painting business when I couldn't secure a paid internship, and it doesn't stop there.

Creativity is paying for college when you're a low-income, first-generation student.
Creativity is creating a study guide or a study group or when you're taking an especially difficult class; it's developing resources for your loved one when they're going through a difficult time or starting a fundraiser when you see a need in your community
Creativity is contributing to a social movement when in the midst of a pandemic.

In all, creativity is about being a problem solver, and it's often born from resilience. And who else knows better about problem solving and resiliency than us? We all climbed a mountain to get to college and faced numerous hurdles throughout. As members of historically marginalized communities, we face problems each and every day - but we did it, we're here, and we have ourselves and many others to thank for this. Family, friends, faculty, and especially all those at CMAE, thank you so much for all your endless support over the past years - I think I speak for myself and many others when I say that CMAE was truly my home away from home.

Moving forward, I think we should all continue practicing creativity - it's what's brought us this far, and it's what will take us even further. Thank you for your time, and congrats again class of 2020! *shows graduation cap painting*