**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

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Family, friends, faculty and administrators, and of course, my fellow graduates, today is a very proud day for all of us, commemorating the completion of our studies and the attainment of our degrees here at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. For the past three years, under the watchful and wise direction of our school president, Dr. Michele Nealon, we, as a collective and as individual students, have done the course work and field work to prepare us properly to take our place in our respected fields of psychology. I would, on behalf of all of my fellow graduates, like to express our most sincere gratitude to Dr. Nealon and her colleagues for providing an invaluable support system as we made our way collectively and individually to this milestone.

I would also like to acknowledge all of the guests that are here, celebrating with us today. The moral, familial, and physical support and encouragement we have received from **YOU**, the most important people in our lives, has propelled us to this completion and achievement. Your contribution to the realization of our goals is priceless, and whether you realize it or not, many of us would not be here we’re it not for your spirit and reassurance. A woman named Virginia Satir addressed the validity and importance of human and literal connection. She reminds us, “We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need **TWELVE** hugs a day for growth....”. Based on that, today will be a day “for the books!!” (**Wait for the laugh**).

Over the past three years, my fellow graduates and I were challenged and tested. We were taught and we were assessed. We looked inward as we searched for the ways to research and implement observations and therapeutic techniques that would serve to heal and encourage our community and our prospective patients.... and we did that as a team. At times, the course work seemed insurmountable.... (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)... I’m looking at **YOU**, dissertation portion!! (**And wait for the laugh**) ... but we conquered all of the obstacles placed in our paths and ultimately fulfilled our goals..... all with the intention to serve others.

Abraham Maslow wisely said, “If you plan on being anything less than you are capable of being, you will probably be unhappy all the days of your life.” Thanks to our studies here at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, this commencement signifies a completion...and the beginning of our official entry into the world of professional possibility that stands before us, starting **RIGHT NOW**.... and right now is the perfect time for each one of us to stake our claim as we accept our mandate to offer others the opportunity to achieve greater understanding of self. This world, one in which we clearly see is growing more complex and challenging, provides a mandate... we all must find the greatest means to personal growth and well being. We graduates have been blessed with attaining the knowledge to do that.

In an article found on the website of the American Psychological Association, we learn that “According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for psychologists overall will grow by **NINETEEN PERCENT** between 2014 and 2024, much faster than the average growth predicted for **all** occupations.” We are in the middle of that growth cycle right now and the world really does wait for our contribution. Clearly the work we do, the standards we have been taught to set, and the compassion we have discovered and expressed throughout the course is needed more than ever, and whether we choose family practice, institutional or professional assignments, private practice... and any of a myriad of sectors, our unique contribution is vital to our society and our communities.

The connections we all formed throughout our tenure here at school served us as much as the courses we conquered. We shared innermost thoughts and outermost notes and experience and through that process, we experienced the intensity of authentic human connection. I am so proud to have been a part of this amazing group and I am even more proud to take you with me as I find my way professionally. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in one of his poems, wrote, “I am part of all that I have met.” I cannot imagine a more apt image than this.... to know all of you and to have bits and pieces of your inspiration stay with me, to inform me and to guide me through the process of life is priceless. Let us go forth, take the strength we’ve gained from one another, and make a healthy, positive difference in the world and that of our families, children, and future. Thank you all!!