“Well isn’t this a beautiful sight! Here in this beautiful space, celebrating this wonderful milestone of the Boston Architectural College, and most importantly, celebrating all of you!

To say that I was honored to be asked to speak to you today is a colossal understatement. That the BAC has invited me, an alumna, to speak at this milestone time, is a true testament to the culture of the BAC, to the spirit and sense of community that it fosters and represents. And I thank all of you for this opportunity.

I represent one of thousands of alumni that have graduated from the BAC over the past 125 years. It’s quite an honor to be part of that group, and now you are part of the club – and you do know that we started out as the Boston Architectural Club. But as the design industries have evolved, the college has evolved-and the Boston Architectural Center, and now of course the Boston Architectural College, is one of the most highly respected design schools in the world.

I first graduated from the BAC 22 years ago. And I’m here graduating again today, so I have the unique opportunity to speak to you from two perspectives. I know very well what it is like to be a student at the BAC. I know how hard you’ve worked – I’ve been there! And, I also now know what it is like on the other side. So, I come to you from the future – your future – and I’m here to tell you – that you made the right choice! You made the right choice about your choice of profession, and you made the right choice about choosing the BAC as the place to get your education. I can honestly say that I have never had one regret about my career path. You made the right choice.

You have entered the most fulfilling profession there is. Whether you are an architect, interior designer, landscape architect, or are pursuing the range of opportunities that your degree in design studies will afford you, you all share one common and incredibly important goal – to enhance the lives of people. Every single day, every design decision you make directly affects people - people of all ages, locally and around the world - people living, working, playing, healing, learning. – everything they do and experience. There is no other profession that impacts people at such a profound level.

And there is nothing more satisfying as a designer than to hear from someone that a space we designed has had a positive impact on them –
- we hear from patient’s families that their loved one is happier, and more comfortable in a patient room we designed
- we hear from children that their new library is fun and they love reading there, and from their teachers that the space has made it easier to provide a rich learning experience
we hear from companies of all types, from law firms to video game companies, that we “got” their culture, and that not only are their employees more productive, but they are happier coming to work.

The stories go on – hearing the impact that we have is the best part of our work.

Design Matters – Design Matters a lot. It always has, and as designers, we know that, but now the whole world seems to know it. Design has become part of the business lexicon. I recently heard a statistic that 20 years ago the word “design” was mentioned in the popular media about every 3-5 minutes – which is a significant frequency. However in 2014, the word “design” is mentioned in the digital and social media nearly every second, worldwide.

Companies hire “design strategists”, and promote “design thinking”. What they are referring to is what we as designers do best – creative problem solving. We know that design is not only about the aesthetic – we know that it means much more, and as designers we have to communicate that message to our clients, and to the public.

It is wonderful that design is at the forefront of conversations across all industries, and it is a huge opportunity for designers to lead that conversation. It is also imperative that the true value of design be upheld, and that as designers we advocate for the value of our professions, - all of them - and the value of design to the community at large.

As designers we are scientists, and artists, and psychologists. And we are researchers. You all are expert researchers – I know because I’ve seen your thesis and degree projects. To me this is the most impressive thesis exhibition I have ever seen – full of thoughtful, creative, critical thinking. Design that identifies a problem, and solves it, with a blend of metrics-based research, compassion and innovation.

Research does not stop when you leave school – it carries through to every part of your practice. At my firm STA, research is at the core of our practice - Design to the Power of Research – it is our company’s philosophy – our driving principle in everything we design – and I offer it to you to carry with you into your careers – Design to the Power of Research.

Design is a rewarding, rich profession, and believe me design does not get boring. Every day is different; every day is a new challenge. In one day recently I worked on a church, a nightclub, 3 child care centers, 2 workplace projects, 3 colleges, a healthcare center and a café. In what other profession can you do that?

And the Design industry is continuously evolving, impacted by cultural, global, economic and technology trends and developments. Some examples -

- When I was in school, ADA was a new regulation- now universal design is an essential part of our vocabulary.
- In the last ten years, sustainability was a choice, an expertise – now it is a given – there’s no question, that we all MUST design with the future of our environment in mind.
- When sustainability first became a focus, it was only about the environment – now we talk about the sustainability of people, of wellness, of how our design affects the well-
being of a person. Once again, the BAC is at the leading edge of this important conversation
- When I was at the BAC, it was exciting to talk about onset of 3D visualization tools, and no one had heard of BIM – now we have 3D printing, we talk about 4D visualization, and self assembly. Think about the implications of what that means to how we design, everything from a piece of furniture to a city
- And who knows what’s to come next

So, being a designer is the best -
And what better place to have gained your design education, than the Boston Architectural College. For 125 years, the BAC has been doing much more than educating architects and designers – it has been the core of the design community, and the cutting edge of design education across the country. As a leader in the concept of practice based interdisciplinary design, the BAC is the model of the future of our profession.

The spirit of community and collaboration continues to be strong at the BAC. Almost 15 years ago, our firm designed the renovations to 320 Newbury, including the “fishbowl”, the gallery and the loft. It was an incredible experience to design a space that we had learned in, and taught in (my final thesis presentation was in what is now the loft, so that was a happy transformation to me!) But we did not do the design alone – this was a true partnership and collaboration between design team, students, faculty, administration, and governance to reexamine the needs of the students, and the culture of the college community. It was the best model of the value of collaboration.

You have all gained a tremendous education here. As President of the International Interior Design Association this year, I have been doing a great deal of traveling to chapters and events around the country, and beyond. And everywhere that I go, the BAC name is strong among educators and professionals alike. The design community knows that BAC students are of the highest caliber. In my firm, Silverman Trykowski Associates, not only are we 100% BAC graduates and students (including my partners Tom Trykowski, my BAC Thesis Representative, and David Silverman, my husband) – but we also have the great fortune to have one your classmates on our team – For 5 years, Sarah Broadhead has brought exceptional design, technical, communication, and creative problem solving talents to every project that she works on. Congratulations Sarah, and thank you!

The BAC also has given you the tools to become a leader – a leader in a project team, a leader in your firm, a leader in your profession. I became a member of the International Interior Design Association as a student– I was encouraged to join by one of my faculty at the BAC. Little did I know that 25 years later I would be president of the entire association. I was mentored along the way, by so many people who encouraged me to participate and engage, and I looked for and capitalized on opportunities as they were presented to me, and I challenged myself to try things out of my comfort zone - and now here I am! You can do the same. Graduating among you today is a great student leader, Marcus Hamblin, who I am sure will continue along that leadership path throughout his career – congratulations Marcus!
The BAC will always be your Design Community. Whether you are a student, faculty member, staff or alumnus, the BAC is the central core of the design community, and an opportunity for you to maintain connections, establish partnerships, inspire and be inspired. Nothing that we do is in a vacuum - design is about community and collaboration. I strongly encourage you to stay involved with the BAC, through the alumni association, through mentoring, through teaching - not just because you owe it to the BAC, but because your education does not end here today. By staying involved at the BAC, you will advance your career, and you will be inspired. My greatest inspiration over the years has come from working with you – truly - working with students with fresh innovative ideas, energy and passion.

Now, since I am now the only thing standing between you transforming from being a student, to being a professional, I am going to close, and let the festivities begin! But first, a little advice:

First, recognize that it took a lot of support from friends and family to get you where you are today. My own family has been an incredible rock for me for my whole career, especially my parents who are here today, and, my husband David, an alum of the architecture program – we are the literal marriage of architecture and interior design, kind of a Romeo and Juliet! David has been as involved if not more than me at the BAC – from teaching to governance, to designer, to being President of the Alumni Association. We’ve done just about everything there is to do at the BAC, and he inspires me every day
So the first thing you should do, is give everyone who supported you through your education, your family, your friends – give them a big hug, and thank them. I’ll do the same!

Second - there are lots of opportunities out there – especially now. The economy is great. Find what’s right for you – don’t settle – think about what is important to you, what drives your passion. Think beyond traditional roles and paths, and craft the career that will inspire and give you the opportunity to make your mark. But don’t sit back and wait for opportunities to come to you. Be proactive, get involved in the BAC, in professional associations, in community groups, whatever drives you. Build your network, and find your passion, and go for it

Next, be inspired by the every day - I’ve been calling design a profession, but design is much more than that. Design is not a job, a 9-5 thing that we do. Design is really a way of life. Whether we are at the office, or on a walk, or traveling, or with our families, design is always with us. I don’t mean that we are constantly thinking about how to solve that complex stair section we were working on in the office - but in the background we are always absorbing and thinking and observing – I’ll be on a walk and see a rock wall, and wonder how did it stand for 125 years; How did a violet grow out of the middle of it? What a beautiful contrast of rough and smooth textures; how light creates intense shadows and electrifies the purple and grays. And all of this musing will find its way into our design vocabulary and toolkit – in structures, lighting, palettes, balance, beauty and delight. It helps you to see things in new ways. So now that you have all of this extra time on your hands, open your eyes beyond what you think of when you think “design”, and let yourself be constantly inspired by the world around you.
Finally – Always remember why you became a designer. You became a designer for people. Think about each and every person with every design move you make, and know that you will have a profound impact on people throughout your career.

I am happy to continue this conversation with each of you, and I extend an open invitation to connect, come to the office, have a coffee – just please don’t all come at once! Congratulations to each and everyone of you, and I wish you the very best for a successful career and a rich life of design.”