

**2012 Commencement Address
Bryan Kelly '12, Humboldt State University**

Good afternoon to all the family members, friends of graduates, faculty, staff and of course all the graduates.

First, and foremost, I would like to begin by saying I am humbled to be standing in front of what some have said is the greatest graduating class ever to graduate from Humboldt State University. I know this because I am the first one to say this is the greatest graduating class ever, so please don't let me down. No pressure. But really I am truly humbled to be here and to be your commencement speaker.

I would like to begin by asking all the graduates to stand with me for a moment. (Pause) Seeing as I am also graduating with all of you today, I wish to speak as a collective group rather than as an individual. In recognizing our tremendous accomplishment, I ask that everyone not graduating today please give my fellow graduates a round of applause. Thank you. Graduates, please sit down but do remember that we are speaking together.

I would like to thank President Richmond, Provost Robert Snyder, along with Vice Presidents Peg Blake, Burt Nordstrom and Frank Whitlach for allowing me to represent my fellow classmates of 2012. In contemplating what I would say for today's speech, I thought about how challenging it was to graduate from college and realized I couldn't have done it without the help of my parents and the many dedicated professors I have had along the way. So on behalf of the graduating class I would like to thank all the family members and

professors for believing in us to the end. Or at least what you thought was the end!

I would like to continue this sentiment by letting the parents know many of us will probably still need that support and understanding in the form of rent, cell-phone payments, student loans and the credit card debt accumulated this year at Sidelines. The graduates will need to later inform their parents and grandparents that Sidelines is a non-profit organization that helps orphaned children all over the world learn to read and get off the sidelines. It is not a bar on the Arcata plaza.

Graduates, the truth is that the world outside of Arcata and Humboldt State University is different. All of us graduating today are different. We are unique in the many ways we view the world, and interact with each other and the environment. The fantastic education we've received over the past four, six, or seven years at HSU has given us the ability to hopefully see our true selves. Be Proud, because HSU is a school to be proud of in academics, athletics, science, and social justice. It represents civilization at its best, and for the roughly 8,000 students at HSU, it represents something more than a typical University where students go to class or don't go to class; it represents a place that still hasn't realized the summer of love and 1969 have ended. Furthermore, our endless dedication to the environment has resulted in Princeton Review rating Humboldt State University as one of its top GREEN Colleges in 2011. Why is this something to be proud of, you might be asking? My answer to this is something I have heard President Richmond say a few times about his observation of HSU students, and that is we are qualitatively different.

To the class of 2012, I am here today to advocate that we do not let go of what makes us so unique. Why should we change ourselves to fit in with the rest of society when what we've learned at HSU is that it's actually good to be different from everyone else. At HSU we've learned to be proud of going three days in the same clothes without bathing and reeking of patchouli oil because that is the right thing to do for the environment. By wearing the same clothes we've avoided washing our clothes with phosphates that create algae blooms in the local rivers, and by not showering we've saved precious water.

Yes, all of us at HSU are the real freedom fighters. Our meditation chants, ceremonial fire shows, and thousands of hours of yoga have trained us to be environmental warriors spreading overgrown and unkempt beards, dreadlocks, and ridiculously expensive organic cotton clothing all over the world in the name of environmentalism. We're not afraid to prohibit people's access to drinking water, at least in plastic bottle form. We're not afraid to ask tough questions like is this gluten-free, dairy-free, vegan or vegetarian, free range, compostable, fair trade, GMO free, non-hydrogenated, no high-fructose corn syrup, organic, BPA-free, and for the sake of time I will not continue with this list except to say these questions are our birthright!

As our nation continues to waste such precious resources as water, soil fertility, air quality and the education of its youth, our generation is now given the responsibility of taking a new course. As I graduate today I will be taking the graduation pledge and encouraging all of you to take it with me. We as HSU

graduates will be sharing with the world what we've learned at HSU about social and environmental responsibility, and doing so by the way we conduct ourselves as citizens. My message today is that what makes HSU and all of you so great is that we're graduating from a place that has allowed us to grow and be able to effect change in a positive way. Our success as individuals will be rooted in our ability to remain true to ourselves while accepting others for who they are.

In closing I would like to leave you by saying that your time here at HSU, no matter what you did, was well spent. We're all leaving with degrees that will help you in whatever you choose to pursue. What I've learned in my two-years here at HSU is that the most fulfilling aspects in life are the people you work with and the experiences you have from them. My hope is for everyone graduating today to be able to find what they love to do and work with as many people as possible, not letting differences be the dividing issue, but instead having these differences bring you together to reinvent the way people look at the world. As the world becomes more flat in this digital age and newer models of technology change the way we connect with each other, I think it is time for us to show the world what it means to be hippie 2.0.

Thank you so much and I once again want to congratulate the class of 2012!