

I am so honored and thrilled to be selected the student speaker for the Department of Mathematics at the College of Staten Island, and to be able to speak on behalf of the CSI class of 2022. To all my Mathematics fellow graduates, we started this journey together and finally we have arrived at an important point in our life, both exciting and frightening. Exciting because we are almost through and feel that we have accomplished something meaningful. Frightening because we are at a point where we don't know if it takes longer to go back or to move forward. There is this feeling of being at the finish line, but not quite yet, of conquering the giant, but being unaware of the challenges we are facing next. That is why today we feel both thankful to all the people who helped us come this far and faithful when looking at our futures.

An immense gratitude goes to the professors and faculty members of the Department of Mathematics at CSI. We have had some very difficult years where life as we knew it was challenged and fear was ruling the streets of New York. During these years, you kept our dreams alive, you gave us hope, you created a safe haven of opportunities. You were present despite your own problems and fears, giving your best at a time filled with uncertainty and much pain, therefore thank you! I would like to distinguish my first professors from CSI math department, professor Jesenko Vukadinovic and professor Arundhati Raychaudhuri. I had the privilege of learning from them and was inspired to make Mathematics a minor, and eventually a second major together with my Biology: Health Science degree. Under their guidance, I've not only become a better student, but also a better person. I would like to thank the great professors of the CSI math department, with whom I had excellent learning experiences. My gratitude goes to professors Tobias Schaefer, Chris Conidis, Zheng Huang, Jay Rosen, Paul Rossi, Richard Venuto, thank you for all you have done.

The Mathematics department at the College of Staten Island is lucky to have a devoted staff, who made our journey easier and offered us the tools to succeed. From my experience as a tutor for the Math department, I would like to thank my supervisor Lewis Carbonaro for being hardworking and patient. Jean Ford and Colleen Biagini thank you for all the effort you put into your work as CSI math department secretaries. I would also like to thank Anthony Conte for his work advising all the math students. So thankful that math students have you to guide them especially during their freshman and sophomore years. Lastly, I would like to extend my appreciation to Carlo Lancellotti, the chairman of the Department of Mathematics, someone who works their hardest to make this college a better educational institution by establishing academic and curricular priorities within the math department.

Another gesture of gratitude goes to our families and parents. They have been our most faithful supporters since day one. They believed in us as babies when we didn't know better, and they kept cheering for us when we learned and prospered. During these years, they helped and pushed us forward, always loving and caring, patiently supporting and gently encouraging. Personally, this is a bit difficult because my father couldn't make it to this day with us. I know he is cheering for me somewhere up there and I hope I am making him proud. He has always been my guiding star, helping me to find my path, my trailblazer, working hard so I can succeed. Last year he gave up his light so I could shine even brighter. Furthermore, I am beyond thankful to both of my parents who have always sacrificed everything for me and my brother. Coming to the US as immigrants was the ultimate proof of that. I would like to thank and bow down to a heroic woman, beautiful, brave, caring, courageous, smart. I could stay here talking about her endlessly, to my mom thank you.

And finally, I say to math students graduating in May 2022, my fellow travelers, my friends. Let us keep this light that is given to us here and let us shine it throughout our life with joy. Let us cherish and treasure everything it has given to us so far. Let us use the knowledge we have been given to build wisely, let us use our gifts and talents to do good, let us use our energy to bring progress and fight for a peaceful and sustainable future. May we never forget that many great things in life start small and by persevering together we achieve greatness. We have arrived here to make our communities proud, to show that every dream can become a reality, to break the barriers that society unjustly places. Let us go forward thinking we are never alone and whatever comes behind the doors of the unknown, we will face it with courage and will conquer it with passion. At this moment, we admire every effort, we value every day when we chose our education as our strength forward, when we chose to rise above with the wings of our education. Congratulations to us and may our futures shine bright with the echo of our victories. Thank you all!