

**Theresa Franchi**  
Valedictorian Speech Spring 2016



Good Afternoon. What a beautiful and glorious day it is today in Brooklyn - My home sweet home. Members of the Board of Trustees, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Faculty and

Administration, Fellow Graduates, Alumni, Family and Friends. I am honored to represent the Class of 2016 as Valedictorian and humbly present to you this commencement address.

To my fellow graduates, congratulations!! I am so proud of you – WE earned it! Over the past few years we have all known what it's like to work hard, be dedicated, struggle, yet still have the motivation to

overcome life's most challenging obstacles; And today, we celebrate the accomplishment of a major milestone in our lives.

My St. Francis journey began when my sister, AnnMarie, graduating class of 2011, was inducted into the Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society. I remember attending the induction ceremony, and being impressed by the close-knit relationships that members shared with one another. To my surprise, everyone seemed like family. At that time, I was a senior at LaGuardia High School of Music, Art & Performing Arts still in the process of selecting a college. I was hopeful to pursue a career as a professional dancer, but as you can all see that never happened. After getting a sense of the potential St. Francis had as a college experience, my plans ended up changing for the better.

To many of us, St. Francis College is our second home - spending most of our days on campus studying, writing research papers, being educated by esteemed professors, involving ourselves in activities with clubs, societies and much, much more. We should never take coming from a small school for granted; St. Francis has an advantage that many larger colleges do not have. We are not just numbers here; we are on a first name basis with the professors and staff. We are all recognized for who we are and have had the privilege of receiving individual attention and guidance. To me that's very important. For this reason, I chose to attend St. Francis College.

Being a first generation Italian-American enabled me to fit in well with the warm, loving, and kind people at St. Francis. I'm so grateful to be part of the Franciscan community and share the values of service, respect, compassion, and integrity. As an endowed scholarship

recipient, I have learned so much about the spirit of giving. It's not about what we can do for ourselves; it's about what we can do for others and for our community. This past year I had the pleasure of being the President of the Accounting Society. I helped students prepare resumes, hosted networking events, and offered advice to them, whether it was about the courses they were taking or about obtaining an internship. The point was always to help my peers. Whether or not I made their day better, at least I know that I tried my best and that is the most satisfying feeling. We can all push boundaries to make this world a better place even in small ways.

My parents always taught me to never give up. When times get tough keep pushing through; it's the lessons we learn from dealing with challenges that makes us better people. A huge thank you to my Father & Mother. As much as they are proud of me, I am proud of them. You see, my dad immigrated here from

Naples, Italy when he was 18 years old, leaving his big Italian family in search for a better work opportunity. Not knowing a word of English, he was determined to make it in America. Dad – thanks for always supporting me, it is you that enabled me to become the independent and successful woman I am today. My dearest mom – thank you for always believing in me. Your caring, loving, and genuine personality is much appreciated and I'm grateful to have received all those wonderful traits from you. I love you both very much.

Please a round of applause for all the parents out there who helped us get here today – A job well done!!!

To my sweet sister, thank you for showing me the path to St. Francis. You have encouraged and supported me through this incredible journey; pushing me to go beyond my limits just as any great teacher would. I love you.

I would like to thank St. Francis College for providing me with the knowledge, skills, connections, and confidence to achieve the best and biggest dreams. The Accounting Department for the challenging, yet engaging lesson plans that have bestowed upon me an exceptional accounting education. Thank you Dr. Nogara, Dr. Horlick and Professor D'Elia. I feel well prepared to start my professional career at Deloitte, a premier accounting firm. A special thank you to Professor John Lombardo. As my mentor, role model, and professor you guided me, believed in me, and supported me in all my endeavors throughout my college career. It is you that encouraged me to become an accountant, and I'm so glad you did.

My fellow graduates, today we say farewell to the school that is worth so much more than an education. As some of us will be starting our professions, going on to graduate school, or pursuing another path in life, I

want you all to remember where it all started – “The Small College of Big Dreams.” The bonds we’ve shared, the contributions we’ve made, the time and energy we’ve invested have brought us here together and will forever remain wonderful memories. Today, we made St. Francis College history! It is now time to build on our successes using the tools that helped us to achieve all that we have so far.

As we embark on our journeys, I leave you with a quote from Steve Jobs, “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it.”

Congratulations again Class of 2016! Lots of luck, health, prosperity, and happiness to all of us now and in the future.

Thank you!