

By Judy Piercey Jun 20, 2019

Students Challenged to Look Deeper

Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright inspires graduates in commencement address



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

“Each year when I see our students graduate, I am reminded of what makes UC San Diego unique,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla as he welcomed graduates and guests at All Campus Commencement June 15, kicking off a weekend of celebration for the 9,325 students graduating from the university this spring.

Khosla continued, “Where else can a microbiologist from Scripps Institution of Oceanography and a physician from the School of Medicine work together to create a revolutionary medical treatment... then collaborate with an engineer from the Jacobs School of Engineering and a physicist from the Department of Physics to test potential outcomes... receive assistance from a data scientist at the Halicioğlu Data Science Institute and leverage the power of the San Diego Super Computer Center? Only at UC San Diego, and nowhere else.”

All Campus Commencement also featured former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, who gave the keynote address, and student speaker Michaela Juels. The event was revived in 2016 to strengthen the sense of community among all graduates at UC San Diego. Khosla officially conferred degrees by academic division and professional schools upon graduates gathered as one student body. Personal graduation ceremonies, where students walk the stage, were held during the weekend for undergraduate colleges, the Graduate Division and professional schools.



Chancellor Khosla greeted students who attended the June 15 All Campus Commencement.

“From the birth of our experimental campus, we made a commitment to exploration and discovery outside the norm,” said Khosla. “We made a commitment to move theory into practice and back again in a symbiotic relationship. We made a commitment to challenge our students, faculty and researchers to look deeper at the world around them. We made a commitment to be inclusive, diverse and equity-minded. And we made a commitment to collaborate with knowledge builders inside and outside the institution in order to solve society’s most pressing issues.”

Keynote speaker Madeleine Albright encourages tolerance

UC San Diego’s cutting-edge collaborative research and the propagation of equality, diversity and inclusion are core values that align with the work of keynote speaker Albright, the first woman to be appointed U.S. secretary of state. As the nation’s highest diplomat, she reinforced America’s alliances, advocated for democracy and human rights, and promoted American trade, business, labor and environmental standards abroad.

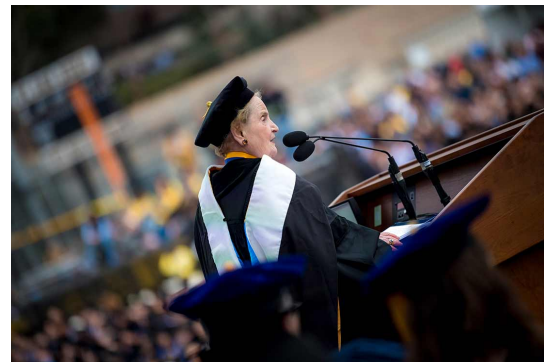
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– *Former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright*

“I feel particularly privileged to participate in a commencement at this university, one of the most dynamic and fast growing on the west coast,” said Albright. “Driving around, as I did yesterday, you cannot miss the major transformation taking place. Clearly, UC San Diego is focused on the future. This is reflected in the courses you offer, the students you attract, the exchanges you conduct, and the values of tolerance, mutual respect and social mobility with which you are identified.

“We are all proud of the distinctions that give us our separate identities; and loyal to the groups to which we belong,” she said. “This kind of solidarity is a means of honoring ancestors and a way to inspire the young. It makes us feel less alone and helps us to find for ourselves a unique place in the crowd. But there is also a danger; because when pride in ‘us’ hurdles into hatred of ‘them,’ the American tapestry unravels and the social fabric is torn. The result may be a shooting at a synagogue in Poway, only 20 miles from here, or attacks against members of the LGBTQ community at a nightclub in Orlando. It may be the surge in racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, or the near constant terror of shootings in American classrooms.”



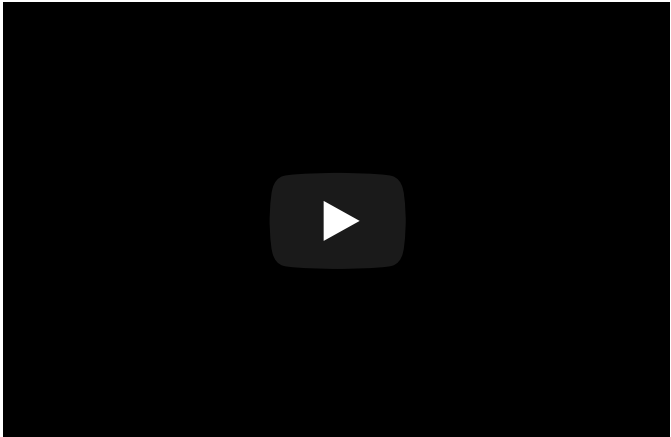
Madeleine Albright, the first woman to be appointed U.S. secretary of state, gave the keynote address.

She reminded students that they are “only a dozen miles from our southern border, where there is a humanitarian crisis made far worse by the indifference of this administration to the desperate plight of migrants from Central America.”

Albright then told the audience she was going to interrupt herself and share what she called her immigrant moment (Albright emigrated to the U.S. from Czechoslovakia at age 11): “One of the things I love to do is to give naturalization certificates to new citizens. And the first time I did was July 4, 2001 in Monticello, Jefferson’s home... I gave this man his naturalization certificate and as he was walking away he says, ‘Can you believe it, I’m a refugee and I have just gotten my naturalization certificate from the secretary of state?’ And so I went after him and I said, ‘Can you believe that a refugee *is* secretary of state?’”

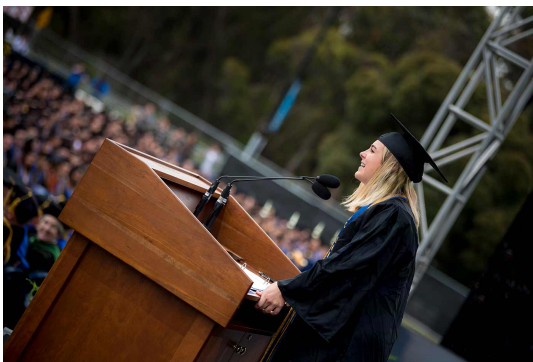
Albright ended with a takeaway for graduates: “This morning, at this ceremony of celebration and anticipation, I hope you will each embrace the faith that every challenge surmounted by your energy; every problem solved by your wisdom; every soul awakened by your passion; and every barrier to justice brought down by your determination will ennoble your own lives, inspire others and explode outward the boundaries of what is achievable on this earth.”

Student speaker Michaela Juels: We are truly all in this together



Since childhood, UC San Diego student speaker Michaela Juels has been fascinated by the human mind. Living with her mother’s severe mental illness exposed her to the perils, stigma and ambiguity that accompany misunderstandings about mental health. The personal experience with her mother’s illness, and sudden death, made her grateful for the support of her fellow students.

“I stand before some of the most incredible and inspiring people I have ever met,” Juels said. “And while my diploma may say ‘Michaela Juels,’ it certainly isn’t the product of just myself. Along the way there have been so many, if not tons, of people who have helped me get where I am today.



A family tragedy made student speaker Michaela Juels grateful for the support of her fellow students.

“Now, I know that in our society it can feel like every person is for themselves, like everyone is out to get you, and that success is only a measure of comparison. But you are all living proof that this is a lie. That we are truly all in this together. That in fact, all of our successes and achievements are not born in isolation but bred in collectivism and support. That all of us can thank someone in the crowd for where we are today,” she said.

“I’ll tell you that my path in college was nothing like the plan I had, and I mean that in the most serious of ways... Luckily, I was not alone. I had family. I had friends, many of whom are in this crowd, who assured me that I was never alone... And

while losing a mother is something that can never be fully mended, it was truly a blessing to be surrounded by people, like those sitting right next to you, who cared enough to make a difference in my life.

“Class of 2019, I know that these years come with so many accomplishments and obstacles. But no matter what you faced, you made it here today. You overcame everything in your way to be here. And we all did it, together,” Juels concluded.