

THE *Current*

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‘A Moment of Triumph’

Between them, they had shown in 82 art exhibits, performed in 259 concerts and composed 137 musical works. They published 31 papers in peer-reviewed journals, developed 14 computer applications, generated 85 research posters and gave as many oral presentations. They received 66 grants, 70 fellowships and 116 internships. And they’re just getting started.

On Sunday, June 9, this group of hardcore UC Santa Barbara undergrads each collected another honor: their bachelor’s degrees. Kicking off UCSB’s 2019 commencement exercises with the first of nine ceremonies over two weekends, the 82 graduates of the College of Creative Studies sat onstage at Campbell Hall, played music, contemplated futures, listened to advice and gave some of their own.

“Today we celebrate a moment of triumph for all of you upon this stage,” said CCS Interim Dean Bruce Tiffney. “Hard fought, hard won, in times dark and bright mixed in.” In his commencement tradition of invoking the blockbusters, Tiffney compared the CCS Class of 2019 to the Avengers, calling upon them to be heroic in their lives and occupations, and to take on the single biggest challenge: save the world.

“We must rebuild and protect our cathedral — our old cathedral — Earth,” he said. “Our planet, our only home, needs imagination, spirit, visionaries of all disciplines, all kinds of mind and heart that will not be stopped by failure after failure, and defeat after defeat. Meeting, adapting to and even rebalancing climate change and environmental degradation — this is the monument of your age.”

Alumni speaker Kenny Broad (literature, '89), knows a little about that challenge. Now an environmental anthropologist at the University of Miami, his work studying the Earth and the people who live on it has earned him recognition as 2011 National Geographic Explorer of the Year. He credited CCS for the “mind-opening perspectives” that set the stage for his explorations.

“Your challenge is to create these connections to the places, people, species in the distant environments that we don’t interact with personally, that we don’t look like, that we don’t think like, whose categories of being one might not understand, but whose lives are impacted by our decisions and vice-versa,” he said.

It’s a tall order for the CCS Class of 2019. But many of them have already hit the ground running, with plans for graduate school, summer internships and research work. Some are heading straight into industry while others have opted to recalibrate with a gap year. Yet others are embracing a moment’s randomness, as they move from one stage of life to the next.

For the moment, however, it was all about celebrating their big milestone, after years of productive study and research. Cheered by friends, family and faculty who filled the auditorium, the graduates each received the degrees conferred upon them by Chancellor Henry T. Yang, followed by festivities outside at Campbell Plaza.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.