

Student Commencement Speech 2026

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My first day at Montserrat, I showed up to orientation in a light blue terry cloth shirt and I had the body of a much smaller boy with a lack of mustache. I remember one of the first things we did is we all got into our orientation groups in the commons and gathered in little circles. And then we began to play duck duck goose. As soon as we started playing duck goose I started to relax. This is when I realized that maybe college wasn't as serious as I might have feared. Before Montserrat I had a very rigid outlook when it came to my artistic practice. I viewed failure as mistakes, rather than learning opportunities. Thankfully this all began to change when I became a Monster Rat.

For many artists, their artistic practice is one of solitude. Individual work is something that is important to my practice and many of my peers, yet I have found that the input from my artistic community has become crucial to informing my independent practice. Having a network of artists has expanded the possibilities of what has been possible for me to accomplish. My time at Montserrat has made me realize how fundamental the input and collaboration of my peers and professors has been to my growth as an artist. Times when I have felt stuck or limited have been broken by the imagination and creativity of the artists who surround me.

The structure of Montserrat has allowed me to dabble in many different creative fields and build lasting connections with artists of all different concentrations. I will always cherish the countless hours spent in various different Montserrat Studios. Working independently together with my peers. We would struggle and fail together, but when myself or someone else would experience a challenge, there would suddenly be a room full of people trying to find solutions. Before Montserrat, I had never felt a sense of togetherness when working alone, and I had also never felt success from failure. I learned the importance of community and mistakes when it comes to my practice as an artist.

The last 4 years have been a pivotal moment for me and many of my peers. My time in college has been full of constant change. Change is scary, but it has also been very exciting. With my peers, a lot of us experienced many firsts together. Many of these firsts were failures. Failing to make an omelet, overestimating the size of a stairway and failing to bring a couch up three flights of stairs, and making plenty of art that is now hard to look back at. Yet when looking back, I don't remember the feeling of failure I only remember the laughter and the moments of learning.

These moments were crucial to my development as a person, and especially as an artist. Making mistakes was made easier when I was surrounded by people making the same mistakes, and in an environment that pushed us together and encouraged us to work through these mistakes as a collective group. Creatively, I have almost learned more from failure and mistakes than I have from successes. Spending hours in the print lab printing dozens of unrecognizable blobs made me value every successful print that came much later. Glazing a ceramic sculpture and waiting eagerly for it to come out of the kiln, only for the glaze you chose to look terrible, made me realize the value of pivoting. In actuality, I came to learn that failure was really only a form of growth. Creative exploration has been one of the greatest things of my time here, and it has been a privilege to explore and create alongside the class of 2026.