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## 2021 COTA Dean Graduation Video Text

Hello and Congratulations! I am Robin Bargar, Dean of the College of the Arts. I wanted to take a moment to applaud you and to share this special recognition of your academic success.

As you conclude the final classes, tests, papers, projects, and Zoom meetings of your graduating semester, you are, right now, embarking on, and immersed in one of the most important events and transitions of your lifetime. A transition that is also one of the most important for your family, your friends, and your communities.

Why is this moment and your achievement so important? Because this is really happening! So many of our recent semesters have been virtual. But you: You are authentic. Your achievement is authentic. And that is because of you. You made it happen.

Each of you carried yourself to this particular moment. A space where only you can be, a singular place you have shaped for yourself in the world. You stand on the threshold of your future. But you are not alone. Your fellow graduates stand with you – powerful, inventive, and determined artists and scholars, individuals who make up your cohort and who join with you in taking your next steps: from student to wherever you take your life, and wherever your life takes you.

Ours are extraordinary times. 2020 and 2021 will go down in history. Our very real struggles, and our victories will be legendary. Which means, you are the stuff of legend.

And you have learned from legendary faculty with support from heroic staff. The stories of how we all connected this past year are also the stuff of legend. For example, Art Education faculty and staff packed up nearly 200 boxes of necessary supplies for courses and professor Laurie Gatlin and her husband drove more than 800 hundred miles to drop off those art kits to students unable to come to campus and pick them up, traveling more than 14 hours up and around central California and back again. Their 2-minute video documenting the trip is viewable on the link below this one.

We know you respect and love your teachers, and I know they care deeply for you. They are painfully missing the moment to embrace you as you leave their care.

During this year and more of learning virtually, your achievement and perseverance have been a living reality that demonstrates you are ready for whatever life brings. Your success here is a testament to the world, a message: You make a difference. You are up for a challenge. You can make real change, and most definitely, you can make really great art.

For now, revel in that, and enjoy the knowledge that everyone who you know and care for, everyone who knows you, is proud of you. I speak for your faculty, your Beach community, your fellow students, and the staff who supported your educational and artistic endeavors here – While many of us have been challenging you, all of us have been cheering for you, and you did

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good. You made it happen. You are better, stronger, and more aware than at any time before this. Take the gifts and lessons and challenges you overcame as a student and allow them to fuel you further, to journey farther. Use your agency and artistry as a power for change and for good in the places where you live and work and play. Be a power for change and for good in the lives of the people who you love and who love you, and in your communities.

We could not be prouder of the artists you are and the artists you will continue to become.

Congratulations, and Go Beach!