

Commencement 2021 – Video Message Script for Provost Jersky

I am honored to be here congratulating you and celebrating your achievements. My name is Brian Jersky, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs here at Cal State Long Beach.

I started at Cal State Long Beach five years ago – I was excited to represent this amazing campus and we've worked together with you to achieve your goal of a college degree. I felt hopeful for the future then, and still am, and was optimistic about what we could all accomplish. Since I have been with you, I feel so fortunate to be celebrating this achievement with you.

As you look forward to your new journey, the world today remains uncertain and ever-changing. Every day seems to bring a new "once in a lifetime" event and it's certainly exhausting.

The mental and emotional strain of last year has left a mark on us. We are all different from where we were one year ago. And yet, in a small way, this might be cause for joy.

One bright light I cling to during this dark time is you. I have so much hope for what you will accomplish. It's true, we live in a new normal and we've experienced unprecedented stress and social change. Today we are together in spirit, and content in the knowledge that while we face many obstacles, we have overcome each one. Your degree and education are proof of this!

The Class of 2021 is above all things, characterized by your strength, your determination, and your passion. There has never been a class quite like you, and there never will be again.

I've had the honor, and the privilege, of speaking and interacting with many of you, our CSULB students. I can without any doubt say that you're incredibly hard-working, dedicated, and talented. I know many of you have worked one, two, even three jobs to support your pursuit of an education. I applaud you all for your dedication and your perseverance and now your success.

You're also passionate and curious. Every student I've met has felt so excited about your field. Your fire burns brightly, and it's contagious. We've equipped you

with an education, but you brought this passion all on your own. It's because of this I know for sure that you're on to great things.

I'm sure there have been times you've wanted to quit. Or times you've wondered whether a college degree was worth it. This was likely between 2 and 3 a.m., in the hours just before a midterm exam. Or moments where it felt too difficult because you were overworked, stressed, and tired.

I know that this first year after completing your studies has been especially difficult. Searching for jobs, trying to stay safe, and working to maintain your mental and physical health is a heroic task. But in those moments where it feels impossible, like the future is too difficult to manage, I want you to remember how much you've already overcome. You are stronger than you think, determined to succeed, and your passion elevates you above the rest. You are true heroes.

I wish we were able to congratulate each and every one of you in person as we usually do. I wish I could experience the joy of shaking your hands and greeting you, our future scholars, authors, change-makers, and everyone in between. Instead, I look forward to waving and cheering you on during our planned commencement days.

Most importantly, I want you to remember that these circumstances do not diminish your greatness. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of what you have accomplished. You exemplify what CSULB is all about, and I look forward to watching you change the world for the better.

Congratulations to you, the class of 2021!