Chancellor Sir George Alleyne, Vice Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof. Archibald McDonald, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences Professor Evan Duggan, distinguished guests, other members of staff, Parents, ladies and gentlemen and last but certainly not least, the graduating class of 2015, good morning to you all.

Congratulations! We are pleased to offer you a place as a Full-Time student to read for the Bachelor of Science degree at The University of the West Indies. Many of us underestimated the meaning of this sentence and had to learn the hard way. Mixed feelings sunk in, for some we were filled with excitement to be accepted into this prestigious institution. For others the very thought of leaving home and venturing on a new path was somewhat overwhelming.
As Ralph Waldo Emerson said “do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” So however smart we were or timid or mediocre, one thing was for sure we started a journey into the unknown to create a path and leave a memorable trail.

Orientation was the means of preparation for the hardship to come, drills on how to become the best you can be and friendly competitions to get our minds and bodies prepared for our expedition. For those like myself, who did not live on a hall, school for us began with course selection. While hall students filled Instagram with posts of all their guild calendar events: Prestonites had 'Mask-A-Raid', Rexans had 'Swipe', Taylorites had 'Wet Fete', Chancellorites had the Color Party and the campus received blessings from the Seacolites with their Gospel concerts.

We tried our best to select classes that were scheduled later rather than earlier mornings. As the saying goes "God gives every bird a worm, but he does not throw it in the nest," therefore the initiative to register early got us the best timetable, evidently we had extra relaxation time
after social events 'Thursday night integration', whilst those who
registered late did not have that luxury; they would still have
to be up early for their 8 am classes. I hope they caught some worms.

With first year behind us, a new school year
dawned, but yet, another hurdle to jump. Greetings on our SAS profile
where the GPA was now changed to a higher marking scheme, sigh,
“how will we get our A’s." The doubt sank in, "how will we
overcome?" I mean, wasn't life hard enough having to juggle a part
time or a full time job, kids, extra-curricular activities, doing a double
major and for some of us it was all these factors. We clung to
the thought "God gives the hardest battles to his strongest
soldiers.” Determined to achieve our goals, we conquered this stage.

The UWI experience was not only about reading for a degree, it was
making us into well rounded graduates and global citizens anchored in
the Caribbean reality. UWI is a cultural platform where students from
various Caribbean countries and the world share the privilege of
attending this prestigious institution. This cosmopolitan environment
taught us that diversity should be celebrated, not just accepted or tolerated.

Carnival was the event of the year; even non-students marked UWI carnival as a must attend event on their calendar.

Most of us tried our best to complete assignments on time because after carnival events, our minds and bodies would be exhausted. Ring road was a sight of perfection and raw energy; it was the ultimate showcase of cultural diversity in the university and country. The true Caribbean spirit came alive each year.

Final year was the last leg of the race. For those who stuck to the tracks, those who stumbled over the hurdles but still found the strength to continue running, we’ve done it! It wouldn’t have been possible without those under the tree study sessions during “beating season”. Those study buddies who motivated us and stayed up after hours to complete that last chapter before exam, or the friend with the printer who allowed us to print our final projects before the deadline.
The lecturers, who would have those extra sessions to ensure that we understood the concepts; even when it was a foundation course that was outside of our field of study.

We must not forget how we got here today and the thanks that should be given. Parents, Husbands, Wives, Family, We salute you! For being that little push we needed and for those words of encouragement that kept us going. Graduates, we must not forget ourselves and how far we have travelled to get to this day. The five exams in four days, those moments when we questioned our sanity, the tears, and the laughter but we did not let the obstacles we faced define us. Most importantly, we thank God, for granting us the wisdom, strength and endurance to successfully complete this milestone in our lives.

UWI was a place where: Sleepless nights became a lifestyle, multitasking was a skill everybody possessed, teamwork was vital for survival, and we found a family away from home. Today marks the culmination of our 3 year journey, 1,095 days of wondering, if we would make it to this day?
YES! We are the graduating class of 2015. We've made it! Our hard work has enabled us to close yet another chapter of our lives. For some of us this is, it, we can finally breathe. For some, this is just another step for us to achieve our ultimate goal.

We've created monumental memories, durable friendships and experienced life changing adventures. From carnivals, parties and sports day (where us western campus students had to travel to Kingston), to business seminars and integration. From stressing over assignments and studying for exams.

We continued to strive for excellence each day of our tenure and always aimed to project our best. Failure was never an option, we saw the finish line! Now that we've ran the race we can look back and say, “We've made it!” we are all destined for greatness and we have all grown into powerful intellectual beings.
And so as we leave these hallowed halls, lawns and lecture theatres. We vow to leave our footprints in the sands of time. To pay it forward to our nation, region, and the world by lighting the way for others to come.

Over the mountain of adversity we have travelled and now as we look from the valley of decision we seek not to pitch a tent of complacency but to chart a course to conquer the other mountains in our way.

Armed with the light left by others that went before us, we! light our candles to leave light, as we journey on. This is our moment for life. As we go forward remember the sky is not the limit because there are footprints on the moon. Be that light! rising from the West. Hats off to us!