A Debt of Gratitude

I'd like to welcome everyone to this solemn and joyous occasion. It has been a long four years, but here we are, ready to graduate. We worked hard to get to this point, but we didn't do it by ourselves.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the following people. To our teachers, thank you for so unselfishly sharing your time, talent, and knowledge with us. Yes, we know it was your job to do it, but what you did for us went beyond the call of duty. You took the time to explain assignments, sometimes repeatedly because we weren't paying attention. You allowed us to come to your classroom after school for extra help when you could have gone home to spend time with your family. You put in the effort to make lessons more interesting so we wouldn't just tune out. You demanded excellence from us whether or not we wanted to give it. You set the bar high and challenged us to live up to it.

To our parents, thank you for supporting us in more ways than it's possible to count. You dragged us out of bed each morning and made sure we were fed and clothed for school. You herded us out the door to the bus stop or drove us to school yourselves. You helped us with homework, paid our class fees, and listened to our complaints. You came to our plays, attended our sporting events, and chaperoned our dances. You commiserated over our daily dramas, but you tried to give us enough space to learn how to work things out for ourselves. These are just a few of the thousands of ways you've supported us on our journey.

To our coaches and advisors, thank you for making school about more than just classwork. Through sports, we learned how to power on through adversity and give it our best effort, win or lose. We learned the importance of discipline and good sportsmanship. Through other activities like participating in clubs, school plays, and service projects, we learned how to work closely with others to achieve a common goal, and we had a lot of fun doing it.

To our custodial staff and lunchroom attendants, thank you for keeping our school clean and safe. You know better than anyone else what slobs we've been. You actually deserve some kind of medal.

To our principal, vice principal, and all the office staff, thank you for keeping things running smoothly so our teachers could concentrate on us. We're better off for it.
To our guidance counselors, thank you for listening and trying to keep us on the right track for graduation. Without your help, some of us might not be graduating today.

As you can see, behind each graduate there must have been at least a dozen people providing support in at least a dozen ways. The best way we graduates can show our gratitude is to make the most of the opportunity we've been given and go forward into the world with the intention of making it a better place for the generations that follow us. We'll pay that debt of gratitude forward.

Thank you.