

## Daniel S. Smith's Commencement 2019 address

*Daniel S. Smith of Hauppauge, N.Y., is a public policy and administration major. At Wagner, he has been a leader of the Iris Alliance, and LGBTQ+ student organization, and Exceeding the Expectation, a campus disability advocacy organization, as well as serving as a guest director with Completely Student Productions and Student Run Musical Theatre. He is a brother of Alpha Phi Omega. He has complete five internships throughout his Wagner experience, serving with the Office of the Richmond County District Attorney, the Bill de Blasio re-election campaign, the Wagner College Holocaust Center, the Long Island Crisis Center and Gay Men's Health Crisis.*

Good morning President Guarasci, the Board of Trustees and our beloved administration, faculty and alumni. And I want to wish a very special good morning to all of my fellow Seahawks who are now and forever a part of the Wagner College legacy. Ours is a community that is made up of teammates, cast members and peers from many different walks of life that are bound together by a common drive to support and be supported. How many of us haven't had an ugly cry session in a friend's dorm room? Who didn't text the friend group chat when you passed that test you were studying all week for? And who wasn't that source of support for someone who really needed it? Whether we like to recognize it or not, we are all a credit to the Seahawk community sitting under this tent today.

I will admit though, I didn't begin my undergrad experience as a Seahawk. I started off elsewhere in a conservatory style program where I ate, breathed and lived my area of study 24/7. (beat) And two months in, I realized that my soul had become severely malnourished. Where was the political science course that would challenge how I see the world? Where was the math course that would show me how OTHER people perceive the world? By the end of my freshman fall semester, I realized that I needed to expand my horizons and pursue a strong liberal arts education.

My pursuit of a well-rounded education brought me to Wagner College where the Wagner Plan would provide me with a roadmap of courses that would mold me into the person I am today. Taking classes that are outside of *your* comfort zone and *your* personal interests opens your eyes to different ideas and concepts that you otherwise would have never approached. Not only that, but it drastically alters your life trajectory for the better. How many here have declared or changed a major because they took a class that left a real impact on them? How many of you are going off into the workforce with a strong and diverse skill set that is a product of the time and energy you put into your studies?

In reflecting on my time here at Wagner College, I remember the kindness, compassion and support that this community has shown me over the past four years. I have consistently felt loved by the Wagner College community and no more so than when I lost my father right before I entered my senior year. At the absolute lowest point in my life, I cannot express how much it meant to me to have had an outpour of friends, professors and administrators come from all directions to support me in my mourning. And speaking of support, I want to take this time to recognize my two greatest sources of support: mom and dad. (Turn) Mom, you and Dad always dreamt of putting two kids through college. You worked, struggled and dedicated your lives to your children. I can never possibly express how much I love you both and I only hope that everything I do moving forward will make you proud. (Beat) Fellow graduates, please hug your loved ones extra hard today.

Dear friends, today our community celebrates a new beginning. Today we join the ranks of generations of passionate, intelligent and kind Seahawks. Even though we all go separate ways, we are still a community. They were not friends. They are friends. They were not once home. They are home. They did not once really love D-hall buffalo cauliflower. They will always love D-hall buffalo cauliflower.

We are your peers. We are your friends. This is our community. Now let's cross that stage and show the world what it means to be a Seahawk. Thank you.