

SIPHO NCUBE

SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY STUDENT COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

April 30, 2021



Class of 2021, as this day was approaching, whether you were booking that appointment with your advisor to finalize your graduation requirements, whether you were getting ready for commencement, trying to find that ideal quote to put on your graduation cap, the perfect outfit to make you look your best, practicing the walk you would do and smile you would have as you nervously approach the podium to collect your hard-earned diploma. Whether you were reflecting on the highest and lowest moments in your college journey, moments which have led to this VICTORIOUS day or maybe; like me, finally making that call to your loved ones thousands of miles away to let them know that you would be the first in the family to graduate. At some point in time during all of that, we all thought to ourselves “Where to from here? What is the next STEP?”

This is a question that we have heard or even asked ourselves throughout every stage in our lives, be it for academic or personal reasons. What does the next step really mean? What does the next step really look like? Is it finally completing college and becoming the next big name on the Forbes list? Is it starting that small business or is the next step just “winging it?” As I pondered and reflected on this question of the next step, many things I have envisioned for my life came into mind. At that moment, I realized that the phrase “the next step” might mean something different for everyone. A word in that phrase could be broken down into an acronym S.T.E.P which I will tell you about today. This acronym has played a role in shaping who and

what I have become today and could maybe help you too as you plan the next stage of your life.

S- Seize the moment by taking full advantage of what life has to offer you. We hear this every day, and some may think it has become somewhat of a cliché, but we should live by this principle. The first college class I took was in 2014, life then threw me rocks and put me through hurdles that brought self-doubt and questioning as to whether I was supposed to be on that path or not. When I enrolled at SUU in 2017 it was my third university in a third different country, I was not sure if I could even afford to be here, but I had faith. In the fall semester of my junior year, financial hardships struck again; I had to, yet again face the possibility of dropping out of college. I remember that year so vividly because I was serving as the VP of the AUC club. During homecoming week, we were invited to a homecoming banquet dinner. I thought to myself “just go Siphon, it's probably the last homecoming event you'd ever attend.” At that dinner, I met and engaged with a wonderful family. Two weeks after that, I reached out to that family with my story, they then offered to pay my tuition until graduation. That moment that changed my life forever. Had I not seized the moment to meet someone new at that dinner, I would not be standing here today. Never take any moment in life for granted.

T- Triumph, triumph and celebrate the milestones that are contributing to a better version of yourself. These milestones matter, regardless of how big or small they are. As I was writing this, I recalled that one tough chemistry class that I had. In my first attempt I failed, so did I in the second and third attempt, but I did not in the fourth. As I attended that class every morning at 7AM, the professor Dr Ty Redd spoke about “fueling that fire in you.” He encouraged us to chase our dreams and have that fire in us. Today, those words have stuck with me, it all goes down to how much you want it and what you are willing to do to work for it.

E- Empower, empower those around you with the career path that you have chosen. I do believe that there is someone out there who is waiting for YOU to take that first step so that you can also help them turn their dreams into reality. Empowerment should be more than just an action; it should be self-determination. There is a word used in my native language Isizulu, the word is “Ubuntu” which means “I am because you are” the word goes on to form a phrase which says “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” surface meaning is that “a person is because of another” but the deeper meaning is that “you should always believe in the power of community and unity.” With that, at some point in our college journey, we all leaned on another person for support and encouragement, remember to thank all those people who contributed to your success today. That family I met at the homecoming dinner that day, saw the vision that I had and empowered me to stand here today as a SUU graduate.

P- Prosper. This is the goal, the reason all of us are here today, looking our best in our graduation attire, all headed in different directions. Prosperity is like the cherry on top of everything, and what follows that is GREATNESS! I know that some of you may have gone or are still going through hardships that make you question if you are worthy or not, the advice that I can give you and to all of us is, step towards the directions of your dreams. Life has a way placing the small pieces together, and there will be a way as you move forward. This is for the future doctor, engineer, nurse, teacher, pilot, accountant; basically, every degree major present here today. We have a lot to be thankful for. As degrees are conferred, recall that the next S.T.E.P is Seizing the moment, by Triumphant every milestone, empowering those around you and to Prosper!

Class of 2021, I thank you and congratulations!