

*Graduation*  
2020 ISSUE



**THE  
LIONS'  
PRIDE**



THE LIONS' PRIDE  
MEDIA GROUP



## A Message From the Editor-In-Chief

By John Hall  
 Editor-In-Chief

Every college journey is arduous. The commitment to become someone who is educated in a particular thing or group of things speaks to your understanding that you can be more than you were yesterday.

Making that decision was no different for me; I left a job that I was content in for 11 years, knowing that it would cost a lot. Not only in the sense of money I could have earned but in sleep, in my physical appearance (weight gain and loss/baggage under the eyes), and mentally- as many days I struggled to motivate myself to get up for an 8 am class or completing challenging assignments.

However, what I, as well as many of my classmates, have underestimated, was what we gained. The diploma was an inevitable goal; however, intangibly, we gained knowledge well beyond what four years could provide, experiences that cannot be summated in a picture or video, friendships that cannot be explained adequately enough, and the latitude to express ourselves and grow as individuals.



The Lions' Pride provided me with many opportunities to grow and become a better student within the state of Florida and others, despite being a Bio Major.

Being a non-traditional international student was not easy; I embraced the challenge of loving who I would become by integrating quickly into the community.

Finding various organizations that would peak my interests and afford me opportunities to venture out of my comfort zone. Being paired with an academic advisor who was caring, intelligent, and had experienced a great deal of what I had before my college journey, made every class and every semester bearable.

I am grateful to Professor Jacqueline Robbins. Her advising and instruction allowed me to be wiser and more tenacious. I encourage all students to develop a healthy relationship with their advisors and express your goals, no matter how frequent they may change.

Every professor I came in contact with provided me with an opportunity to grow or to grow alongside them, as we discovered things about the craft but also ourselves. As tumultuous as the time may have been, Dr. Bondari, Dr. Shor, Dr. Sheridan, Dr. Kiss, and the host of Biology/Science program Professors and coordinators, your guidance, instruction, and life lessons were appreciated by every member of our cohort.

To Professors like Dr. Chris Friend, who taught us to think out of the box and to understand that we were all "mushfaking" through the college process at some point, while the Dr. B. Lee Hobbs' taught us that the abstract and more colorful concepts are all a part of the hero's journey - our journey we appreciate you, and we carry the weight of your knowledge but also your understanding towards the next phases of our lives. To the



Saint Leo has allowed us to create long lasting memories, with persons from all over the globe, with differing experiences helping us to become stronger individuals.

administration of Saint Leo University, thank you for the opportunity to grow, understand ourselves through success, failures, and setbacks by allowing us to learn effectively through them. The only request I make on behalf of those that I leave behind is that you continue to enable this medium (The Lions' Pride Media Group) to operate as supplementary teaching to what cannot be taught in a classroom. The wealth of knowledge gained throughout these four years mean nothing, if they could not be put into practice, showcased, and be developed through the rigors of trial and error that I have found here.

Dr. Valerie Kasper, you gave each



of us, past and present, an opportunity that very few will ever give us.

You gave us a voice that we can effectively use at a moment's notice, one cultivated in the fire of edits, proofs, and fact-checking. There is not one thing my editorial staff or I could say or do to repay you for your patience, guidance, and understanding.

We appreciate who we became, because you allowed us to be what we chose, never forcing us to conform but encouraging us to evolve. These four years have increased our hunger for knowledge, and our passion for hunting the truth. We indeed found out what it was to become Lions.



From becoming a running lion to conducting senior research, the opportunities to share, and grow with the community provided substance at Saint Leo.



Photos Provided by John Hall

John Hall



Jade Bastian



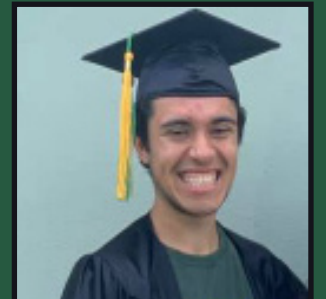
Farida Hassan



William Burns



Bernard Ramos







# Graduation in The Face of a Pandemic



**By Jade Bastian**  
World News Editor

During spring break, universities throughout the country notified faculty and students about the transition to online classes due to covid-19. For some, including Saint Leo University, it was initially set on a temporary basis.

However, within a few days, classes were extended through the end of the semester. In like manner, the commencement ceremony for Saint Leo University had been rescheduled from May 2, 2020 to June 1, 2020.

The stability of the virus was uncertain at the time, but many still had high hopes to celebrate the day that completed the four-year journey that came with hard work and sacrifices.

In reality, it was only a matter of time before it became a pandemic and the world took an abrupt halt.

What was set to be a year of new adventures became a year of adjustment and change of perspective for the Class of 2020.

The disruptive nature of the virus resulted in unemployment worldwide, which has impacted job searches tremendously.

Additionally, the outbreak has taken a mental toll on many students especially since this year was set to be a new beginning.

Saint Leo University and other universities throughout the country have replaced the on-ground ceremony to an online commencement, which is considerate and understandable, but it does not amount to the exhilaration of walking across a stage with a well-earned degree while family and friends watch in admiration.

There were no final goodbyes nor last days spent with friends before parting ways into the next phases of adulthood.

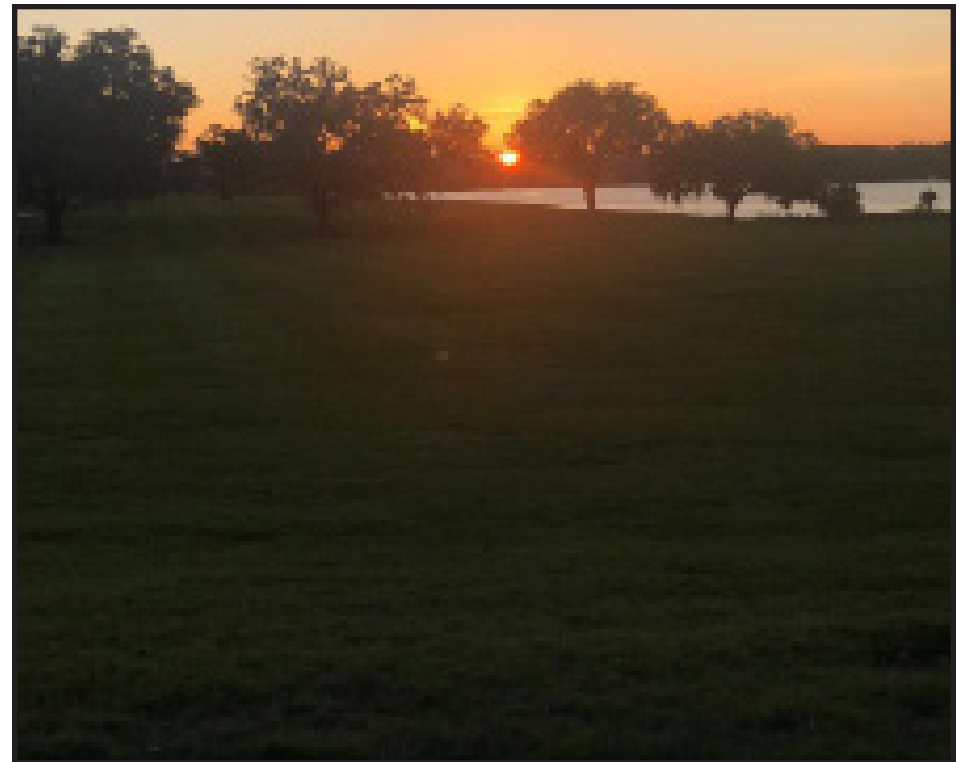
For parents, it was especially heartbreaking to not see their children live out their

dream walking across a stage with degree in hand and huge smiles. The sacrifices and the time spent apart during long semesters makes it even more unbearable.

As for international students, it was emotionally devastating. Some students have not had the privilege to return home during breaks, and graduation day would have been a glorious moment for the students and parents.

In spite of this misfortune, the journey has been completed and there is still much to be praised; four years of achievements, growth, memories, new connections, and life lessons.

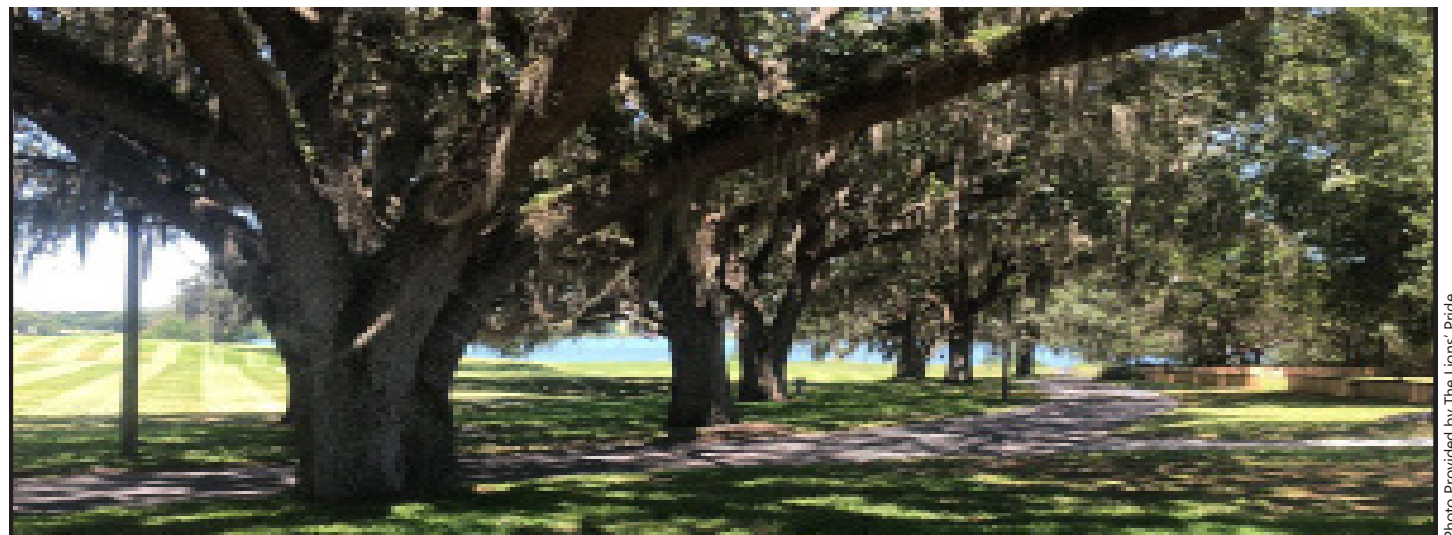
Amidst the chaos, there is peace to be found now that everyone has extra time to create new goals and plans to take the world on as it reopens.



Most students remember the iconic sunsets on University Campus, that would wash away the worries of any rough day.



The campus that was once filled with learning, laughter and other activities, had been reduced to a “quiet place”. The life and vitality of the campus was stripped away as students returned to their home towns and countries.



Many students looked forward to bringing their families from all around the United States, and the world to see the beautiful campus they spent four years on. Sadly, families had to settle for photographs and videos from their loved ones.



## Collin Moran

Special To the Lions' Pride

College is usually regarded as the one of the best times of people's lives. Like most things as you're going through it, writing seemingly endless term papers and struggling to work for some spending money on the side, it seems like it is an eternity, but when you finally reach the end it has all gone by in the blink of an eye. Whether your journey took four, five, or even six years, it's likely it wasn't enough time to experience all of the things that college has to offer. From the wealth of knowledge you tap into every day in the classroom, to the friends you get to see almost every waking hour, or eating at a dining hall where endless amounts of food are ready for you whenever you want, college is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

While this year is unlike any other for graduating college seniors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the feat of graduating with a degree and living through the college experience is something to be so proud of. Graduation time comes with many questions, many of which come from the stresses of leaving your safe space for the last handful of years and moving out into the real world. It's a scary but also an exciting time in a young adult's life, a crossroad of decisions, and each one of you will probably take a different journey from here on out. I have only been out of school for one year and there are still so many questions I have, but here are some things that I wish I knew when I graduated:

### Savor this Unique Moment in Your Life

It is a little bit different for this year's graduating class because many of you have already been away from school for a couple of months, but it is important to take some time for yourself and reflect on what you've accomplished. I think it is well deserved to take a week off after graduation and reward yourself. Only roughly a third of the people in this country have obtained the same level of education as yourself, and while it might not always seem like it, you have set yourself apart from the rest with your hard work and dedication. So before freaking out about not having a job yet or wondering what's next, take some time for yourself and appreciate

all of the hard work you put into getting here.

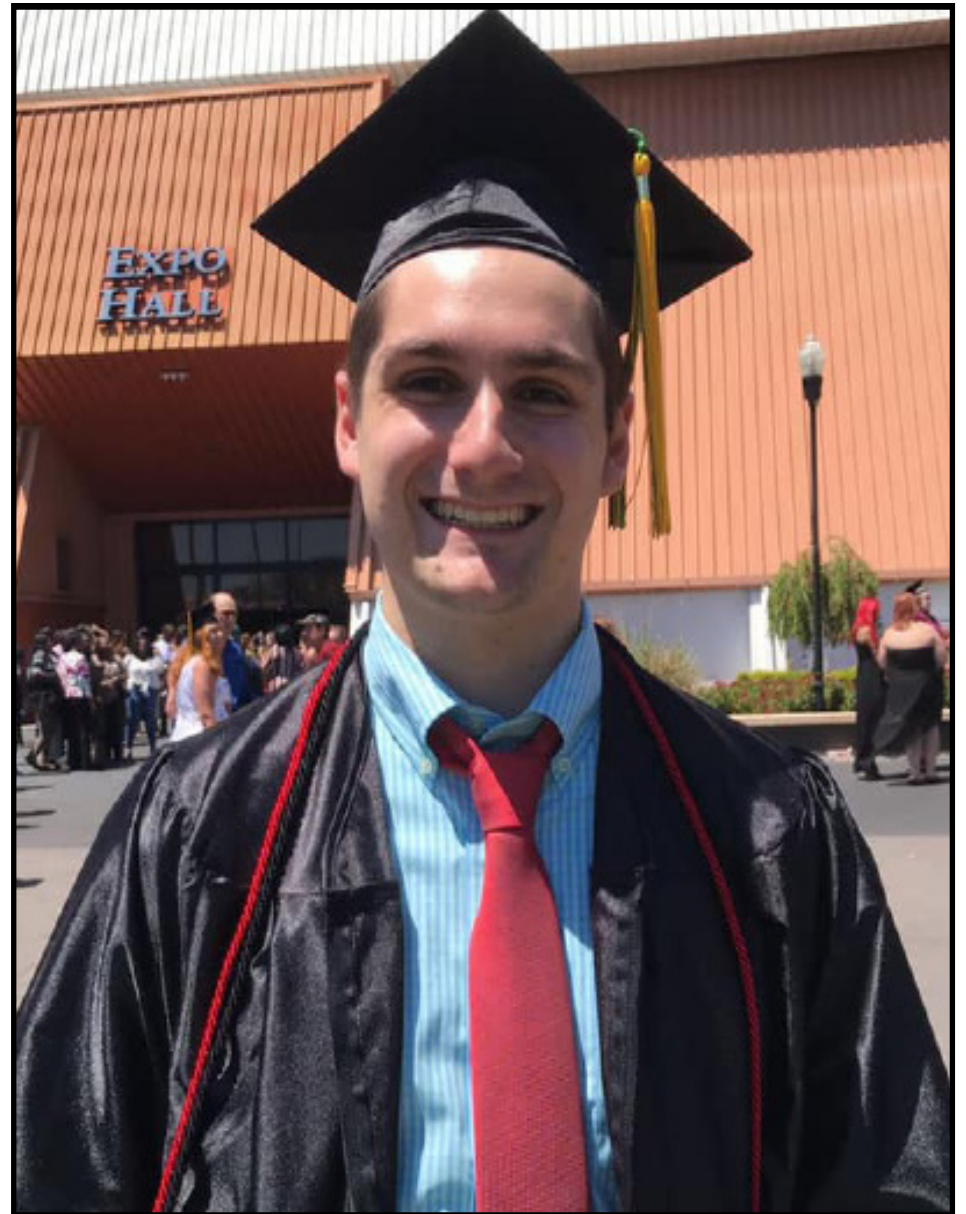
### It is Okay to not Land Your Dream Job Right Away

Again, this is an uncertain time in your life and it can be stressful, it certainly doesn't help thinking that everybody else has landed their dream career right away while you still don't know how to get there. It is completely fine to not land a position at your dream company right away, or not know exactly what you want to use that new shiny degree for. Some people know exactly what they want to do and some do get in with their favorite company after graduation, but the reality is that isn't the case for most people. Now is the time to get out there and earn that valuable work experience to help bolster your resumé so one day you are experienced enough to go after that dream job. Take some time to try out different jobs to see what you like, save some money for the future, and remember that it is totally normal not to make it big right out of the school.

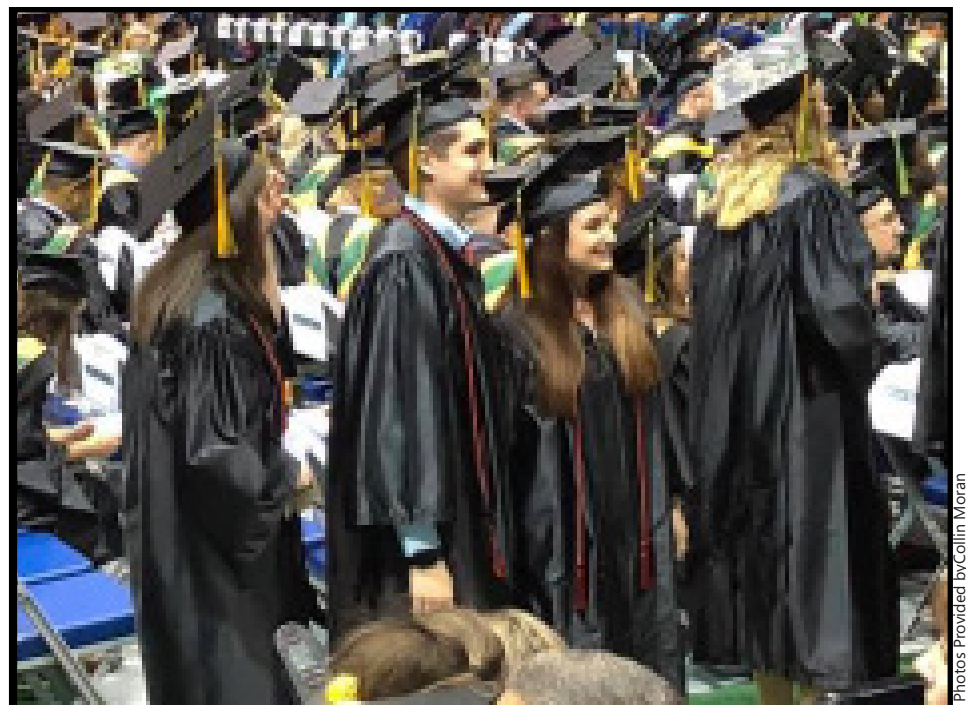
### Stay Connected with your Friends, and Thank Faculty and Staff who have Helped You.

Since COVID-19 shut down your senior year early, it is even more important to stay connected with your college friends seeing that you most likely didn't get that big send-off get together you were hoping to have. Stay connected online and over the phone, once this all calms down try and get together, go to alumni weekend if that's the easiest, but just make sure to keep up with those connections, because you tend to keep many of your college friends for a lifetime.

It's also important to thank the faculty and staff who have helped you get to this point. Typically around graduation time, you would be able to see them and interact, reflecting on your time there and how they helped you get to the end, but during these unusual times, it might be beneficial to send out some emails letting them know how much they made an impact on you. These people you learn from, whether in or out of the classroom may be able to help you out well beyond your time in school, like as a reference or maybe even as a connection for a job. Just make sure you show them how much you appreciated their impact on your college career.



Collin's advice includes staying connected with the friends and faculty that were positive influence over your college career and where possible thank them for their impact.



Moran (center) graduated in the class of 2019 with a Bachelors Degree in professional writing. Moran emphasizes the importance of savoring this moment in time.

Photos Provided by Collin Moran





**By Celine-Deon Palmer**

2019-2020 Student

Government Union President

Hello Lions, as the Saint Leo University Student Government President 2019-2020, I wanted to deliver an official farewell address to the student body, since I am not able to give my in-person goodbyes.

Last year, upon being installed as your 2019-2020 Student Government President, I made a commitment to work on behalf of the Saint Leo student body to the best of my ability, dedicating my time, talents, and other efforts to improve Student Life. My goal was to make sure every voice was heard, and I can assure you that I have worked tirelessly and persistently to keep that commitment. Over this past year, it has been an honor to witness numerous achievements, including the implementation of the Lion's Shuttle, and the opening of Benedict's. A huge thank you goes not only to the members of the current Executive Board, but also to the previous Executive Board of 2018-2019 lead by Derick McIntosh for laying the groundwork, as well as our fantastic Saint Leo University Administration and Staff for following through on their promises to the student body

The feats achieved this past year would not have been possible without some special people. To my executive board, thank you! Everything accomplished this year was not accomplished by me; we accomplished it together, as a team. Giulia, your hard work and dedication to your role did not let up once! As the Chair of the Senate, your eyes and ears were always on the ground. Little does the student body know that the lids on hot drinks in the cafeteria were requested because you shed light on the hazard. Maurqise, you persevered throughout the year and kept the spirit of our Lions up! Thank you for all you did in taking the lead to accomplish one of our huge goals this year in improving our



SGU President Celine-Deon Palmer praised the work of her Executive Board and conveyed her appreciation for the administration of Saint Leo University, for addressing the concerns of the students. Her address can be found at our YouTube Channel The Lions' Pride Media Group.

engagements with Athletics. Ryan, you are one of the most on-task and disciplined people I know, and you took that with you in your role. You were very instrumental in managing the needs of our student body this semester, ensuring that we were responsible stewards while allowing 30 student clubs and organizations to attend conferences, and supporting 13 clubs and organizations in hosting their events. Geshon, you were the glue that held us all together. You kept us on task this entire year, supported the leaders of Saint Leo's Clubs and Organizations, and through your communications, kept our ears tuned.

All of the talents and gifts of the Executive Board would not be appropriately fostered if it were not for our supportive Advisors who guided us tremendously throughout the year. Edson O'Neale, Frank Orlando, Erin McBean, Alexis Sullivan, Aly Magras, and Dawn Mccelveen, thank you. You helped us grow, you graced us with your wisdom and ensured we never strayed too far off the path of making responsible decisions for our student body. This dedication of your time did not go unnoticed, you were not obligated to put up with us each week, and for that, we appreciate you.

A huge thank you to our Campus Activities Board and our Student Government Senators. Our Campus Activities Board put exceptional

time and effort this year to ensure diverse interests were met. Our Senators took charge of a broad range of things on campus; this is the group you should call if in need of anything.

Lions, thank you! You showed up, and you showed out this year. You were supportive in all aspects, you spoke out, and because of your voices, we continue to evolve as a community, becoming greater. It was my privilege to serve as your Student Government President.

To my University, my precious University, I am eternally grateful for all you have contributed and planted into my life, which has helped to build me to be the woman I am today. The endless

resources and opportunities have helped me to grow tremendously in only four years, trust me, I have loved who I became here. Thank you to our upper administration, who has kept our community student-centered and has helped our dreams as students come to life. I would also like to specially recognize Dr. Jen Shaw, who I was blessed to have worked closely with this past year.

As I leave, I go in high spirits knowing that the student body will be in good hands with our incoming Student Government Executive Board 2020-2021. I wish you all well, and my prayers will remain with you.

All Glory and honor be onto our Lord and Savior Jesus



The 2019-2020 Student Government Union Executive Board was led by Celine-Deon Palmer.

Photos by: John Hall



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Crystal Woods	Rebeca D'Jimas	Sarah Noel Ragsdale	Jazmine Arnold	Anthony Maurice Carmichael
Christina Kathryn Tecson	Dayna Mone't Holiness-Beasley	Emmanuel Diaz	Gabrielle Nicole Arrazcaeta	Adam Michael Urbaniak
James A Wells	Samantha Jo Boyko	Tiffany Amanda Rector	Shadai S. Zaine	Kalisha Nicole Eagle
Jennifer Lynn Pero	Jessica P D'Alessandro	<b>Phillip Joseph Waitkevich</b>	Amanda Rhea Colby	Lauren Elizabeth Johnson
Stephen Joseph Liik	Amanda R Harrison	Yenite Gartner	Anett E. Meszaros	Jashanda Daniels
Monica Lucio	Aimee B Deen	Melissa Ann Coates	Nicholas Steven Carideo	Veronica Latrice Session-Fennell
Tisha Daniels	Maria Josette Whitmer	Scott Raymer	Edna Ubervil	Kibwana Wright
Stephen Michael Bonneau	Laine Istvan	Paula Alicia Loehr	Mickayla Shaylon Jones	Rachel Nicole Osborne
Burgandi Starr Bailey	Robert Forrest Thorpe	Heather Jan Hirschev	Dontarrious Eric Rowls	Tracey Jean Hurley
Corey Andrew Carter	Monica Neri	Chloe Marissa Sullivan	Clarissa Jean Ament	Christina Louise Senn
Matthew Blane Nasveschuk	Tommie D Walker	Kristen Theobald	India Keanna Spence	Raymond Anthony Wilson
Conner Joseph Stowell	Annette Noreen Carter	Cheryl Wofford Cole	Gilbert Thomas Derenthal	Estelle Miriam Roseborough
Jeanine Marie Ramirez	Corniche Lamon King	Gregory Adam Cote	Zaid Abu-Sharif	Samantha Jo Murphy
Evelyn J Pazmino Mendoza	Nia Alexicia Partee	Thomas William Glaser	Jade Ramos	Francia Pierre
Viviana Javier	Araseli Hernandez Gawroriski	Samantha Marie Shiver	Magela Publes	Tasmin Avay Munro
Erin Whitten	Ola Sarain Powell	Cynthia Maiorini	Jenny Alejandra Gonzalez	Sherri Desiree Smith
Donald Ray Eubanks	Ellen Viola Carthens	Erika B Girard	Dorian Guy	Luv P Dean
Sarah Nicole Landreth	Lawrence Pivec	Kaisha A Girard	Kendrell Jamal Watkins	
Shawna Ann May	Brandon Watts	Eduardo Martinez	Kevin Massey	
Janna Martins Correa	Jaime Kathleen Allen	Sierra Brooke Kears	Jennifer Cuddahee Colbert	
Sidney Caitlin Kirkland	Lavonda Michelle Johnson	Lynzi Miller	Alicia Ward	
Juan Patino Espinosa	Jordyn Alexis Young	Emily Pulaski	Markita Necole Holmes	
Caitlin Marie Walsh	Laqueenta Ann Griffin	Rebecca Louisa Niblett	Sarah Victoria Szenay	
Jennifer Lynn Mathis	Jessie Annette Barbosa	Risa E Stewart	Abram Andre Muhammad	
Jessica Kimberlee Williams	Keynu Scott	Katen K Amin	Nicole DelNegro Cole	
Leslie Henderson White	La'Codrea Je'Metrea Leland	Anne Catherine Legatti-Maddox	Patrick Masaaki Smoot	
Briana Yamamoto	Robin Garcia	Demetrius Johnson	Kristine Fletcher	
Sandy Singleton Weiss	Danh Patrick Cooney	Marilyn Burnett Ponder	Cory Dale Tomblin	
Nomathemba Aquil	Gregory Charles Miller	Ramon Alvarado	Kedrick Deon Frazier	
Joseph V. Zanna	Carli Parsonson	Anthony Wade Thompson	Cedrick Arnes Jones	
Jeffery Kendall Gaines	Danielle Flores	Terryann Hamilton Nelson	Heather Scarborough Cassara	
Brittanie Long	Timothy Shawn Harkins	Suzanne Bowen	Emiko Sota	
Terri Washington	Lauren M Boos	John Glenn Adams	Timothy Patrick Fletcher	
Carly Rose Baldwin	Brianna Nicole Weaver	Randy Churchill Forbes	Thomas Curtis Dice	
Jesyriam Rodriguez	Philip Augustus McKeon	Edwin Carrillo	Brelin Teal Hoffman	
Robert Conway Kennedy	Mallory Nicole Holbrook	Christopher Thier	Ivan Navarro	
Melissa Lee Smith	Christian Paul Evans	Jennifer Marie Mills	Heavenly Patrice Aguilar	
Luisa Elena Ojeda Vera	Brandon Zubczynski	Mary Elizabeth Branch	Renee Garcia	
Edward W. Helfrey	Ehizogie Ighile	Cheriese Lakita Edwards	Megan Lea Clark	
Samantha Drongoski Landers	Christine Marie Potthast	Robin Marie Davison		
Linda Schimenti	Mary K Peacock	Jacqueline Grimes		
Thomas Oliveri	Darelis Ortiz Vega	Hugo Ricardo Bustamante		
Jessica Rimelis	Ashley Maria Mandracken	Ramona Trimble		
Traci L Dougherty	Christopher Mark Roberts	Boris Tyrone Goodwin		
Angela Nguyen	Sarah Elizabeth McMillin	Stephen DUNCAN		
Tesh Danielle Yu	Kyshonna Tanique Bethel	Charmaine Denise Level		
Sarah Ruth Burfening	Laura Elizabeth Laven	Nichole Nasha Hamilton		
Samantha Michelle Schwab	Tatyana Narjes Pashakhan	Jonathan Mark Mendez		
Trena Miller	Geneva Anne Harsey	Joscelyn Perez		
Brandie Michael Koshar	Daniel F Sweat	Anamae Balla		
Maria Nicolina Hand	Courtney Nichole Walker	Camille Halkias		
		Sarah Silas		
		John Michael Furr, Jr.		

**\*Names of The Lions' Pride Staff have been bolded. Congratulations to all members of The Lions' Pride that have graduated in the Class of 2020.**

The Lions'   
 Pride Media Group  
 Congratulates You!



**By Alora Peters**  
Contributing Writer

Finding a job or internship can be a difficult, stressful, and draining process that sometimes proves to be utterly fruitless. But it doesn't always have to be this way.

That is exactly why the Career Services department at Saint Leo University has partnered with Handshake, so that they can provide the best tools and resources possible to students who are looking for the opportunity to truly shine in the workplace.

Handshake is a job-scouting and personal-branding program that is available to all Saint Leo students.

As long as an alumnus has access to his or her Okta account and login information, Handshake remains open and accessible for all past and present Lions.

Students on Handshake can create their profiles and customize their accounts to make themselves visible to and interact with employers, alumni, and fellow students.

Via the platform, students can list work experience, completed college courses, organization memberships, and other academic or extracurricular achievements.

Students can also upload documents such as resumes, cover letters, completed projects, and a professional photo.

Handshake, in other words, gives students the opportunity to construct academic and professional self-portraits to show employers their

accomplishments and their potential.

Essentially, Handshake is similar to the popular social media platform, LinkedIn.

What makes Handshake special is that employers who have posted available jobs, positions, and internships on Handshake are looking specifically for Saint Leo University students.

Employers listed on Handshake have requested students with the specific skills, majors, and experiences that Saint Leo students already have or are currently learning and developing.

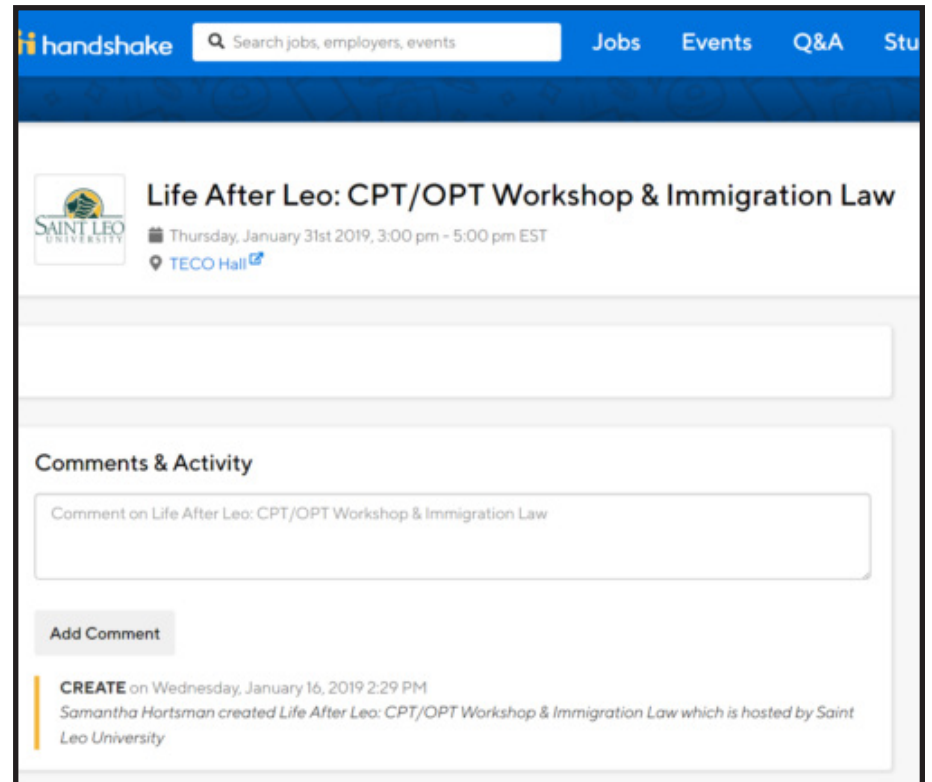
However, Handshake and Career Services offer far more than simply a platform for Saint Leo students to connect with the professional workforce.

Via the virtual Career Center, students can access hundreds of resources, including live events and recorded lectures on a variety of topics, ranging from developing soft skills for a resume to choosing a future career pathway.

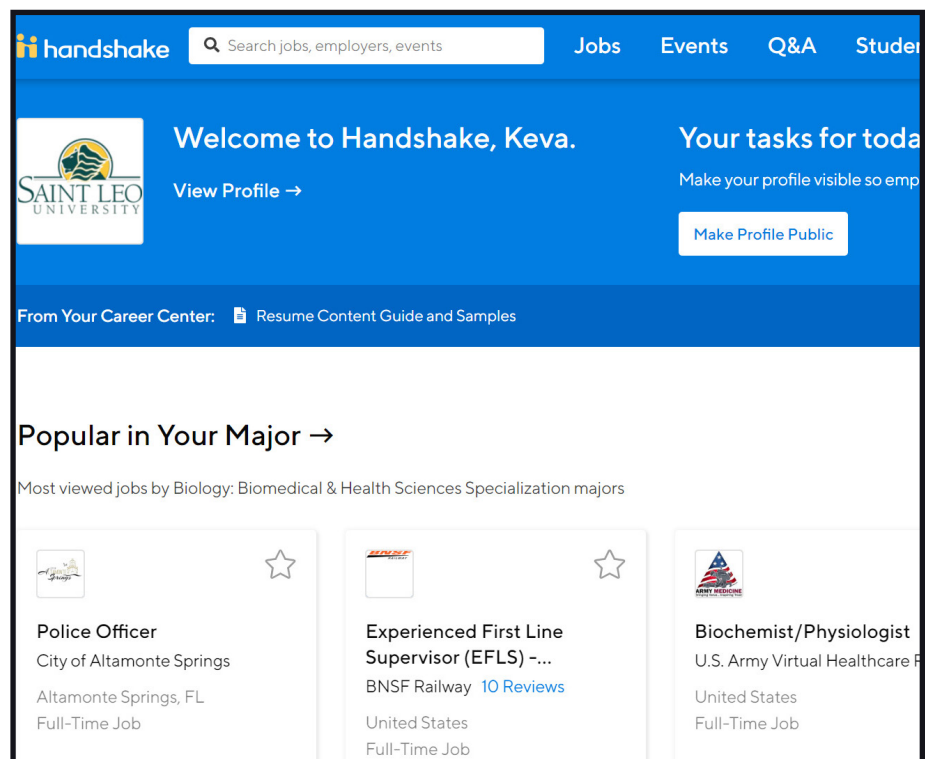
Furthermore, students can make an appointment with a Career Services staff member to learn about job search strategies, review a resume or cover letter, prepare for an interview, and discuss salary negotiation.

Students also have access to 24/7 assistance via tutor.com, another free online resource accessible from the Career Center.

This article may read like a paid advertisement for Handshake, but it is undeniable that Handshake is an invaluable asset that Saint Leo



Using Handshake is simple and easy. The interface is simple to learn and takes about five minutes to get your profile up. (See both pictures to see the interface.)



## Interstride- International Jobs for Graduates

**By John Hall**  
Editor-in-Chief

Mar. 2020 saw the launch of another specialized platform at Saint Leo University.

Interstride is a web and mobile based system that allows students to explore options regarding employment.

Unlike other job based platforms like Indeed, Lensa

and LinkedIn that only provide jobs and aggregate them based on postings.

Interstride utilizes all available resources to provide instruction on bolstering candidates professional profiles and building professional networks.

Additionally the platform assists users that want international jobs, while catering specifically to

international students; aiding them in navigating the tedious visa process, while informing them which companies provide sponsorship opportunities for them to remain in the United States post graduation.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has left many countries including the United States in a precarious position, tools like Interstride are increasingly important.

International students like Shantae Whyte, a graduate from the class of 2020 and Biology major are using interstride to find employment as she was approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT). The program allows international students like Whyte to work in the United States for a year after graduation, and in the case of STEM students, renewable for two years after.





By Alora Peters

Contributing Writer

The end of the school year has always marked a time of change and uncertainty. And that was before words like “coronavirus” and “social distancing” became a part of our everyday vocabulary.

The virulent COVID-19 pandemic has permeated throughout every aspect of our lives, impacting the way we travel, learn, shop, dress, eat, and interact with others. Like any other facet of society, the workforce has also suffered and experienced profound change under the reign of the virus.

By the beginning of May, according to Forbes, more than 30 million workers in the United States had filed for unemployment due to job loss or placement on furlough amidst the nationwide stay-at-home orders and pandemic panic.

Furthermore, many of these now unemployed workers had formerly held positions in fields where unemployment was previously unheard of.

At first glance, these startling statistics are understandably disheartening to newly graduated college students, who are on the hunt for their first out-of-college positions or are looking to get started with the careers of their dreams. It now seems like an impossible task, given how radically the nation has changed over the past few months.

However, this novel economic slump is not necessarily a cause for despair. It may just be time to rethink your strategy.

“Don’t look at that number, throw up your hands, and give up,” advises Susan Mickey, the Executive Director of Saint Leo University’s Career Services department.

Though the graduating class of 2020 is facing a practically unprecedented future, Mickey and the rest of the employees working with Career Services want to emphasize to Saint Leo students that the present situation is not hopeless—it’s just remarkably different.

To start, students looking to find a job in the midst of the



Break down your thought process: ‘What do I do for the next two to three years? I want to get into that company’s door... This isn’t necessarily my target role, but I’ll be able to move into the role that I really want later

COVID-19 pandemic will need to be extremely patient.

“In a slow and uncertain job market, it’s going to take you some time to find the right opportunity,” says Mickey. “The process is just going to take longer.”

With that in mind, planning ahead becomes crucial for graduates. Mickey suggests that job-seeking students should pause to tackle their immediate goals first, rather than focusing exclusively on their long-term goals.

“Break down your thought process: ‘What do I do for the next two to three years? I want to get into that company’s door... This isn’t necessarily my target role, but I’ll be able to move into the role that I really want later,’” says Mickey. In other words, it is important for graduates to work on developing and pursuing a temporary “Plan B” until “Plan A” becomes viable.

In the meantime, there is plenty of work for students to do in order to secure a future career or job.

“It’s a job to get a job,” says Mickey. “You have to be very active in the process.” She recommends students construct a personalized task list and set aside a few hours every day or every other day to dedicate towards searching for jobs and applying for positions. It is also vital for graduates to spend ample time constructing their networks.

“Everyone has to network. Period,” says Mickey. “And right

now, it’s virtual networking.”

This means that students should take full advantage of sites such as LinkedIn and Handshake, where they will be most visible to potential employers and recruiters.

According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, nearly 80% of employers use one or more forms of social media as aids in the employee recruitment process, with a little over 45% using various online sources to identify potential candidates. LinkedIn was singled out as the most popular among employers, having been used by over 90% of employers.

Handshake, a platform similar to LinkedIn, is already available and easily accessible for current Saint Leo students and alumni via their Okta login portal.

The jobs and internships

listed on Handshake are listed by employers who are specifically looking for Saint Leo students, making this an invaluable job-searching resource for graduates.

However, more than anything, students need to remember that they are not alone. College graduates across the nation and throughout the world are facing the same challenging future.

And the employees, faculty, and staff here at Saint Leo University are still ready to help their students rise to the challenge.

“We’re here for you when you need us, no matter where you are in the process,” says Mickey.

Yes, the end of the school year marks a time of change and uncertainty. But it also marks an era of new beginnings and growth.

We can’t wait to see what the future has in store for you. Congratulations, Lions!



According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, nearly 80% of employers use one or more forms of social media as aids in the employee recruitment process,

Photos provided by SLU



By Anna Murphy

Commencement Speaker

I have always felt that it took a great deal of discipline to complete a degree online. Everyone here has overcome and conquered the obstacles life gives to be standing here today.

For some of you, that challenge was earning a degree while serving our country, and I thank you for your service. For others, it may have been squeezing in class time while chasing your little ones around the house.

No matter your situation, you made it, you're here. My struggles, like yours, were difficult and at times almost unbearable.

I have PTSD from years of abuse, and I also have Asbergers. I was born with a crippling condition called Ehlers Danlos Syndrome.

I live in pain every moment of my life, be it from my joints shifting about, waking up on the floor after a black out, or the agony of the rupturing that takes place in my organs. While facing my own battles, I am also helping my son face his.

My son is autistic, and he also has Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. Since he is currently homebound, I care for him 24/7, and it is truly a full-time job.

Somehow through it all I managed out with a high GPA

and the honor of being the Online Religion Major of the Year.

Yet, despite what my family goes through, I was determined to find purpose in my life, to make use of my personal struggles. Though my life may not be long, I knew it could still be meaningful.

For myself that purpose came in a desire to bring people together. As a Religion major at Saint Leo University, I have had the privilege of working with many of you, and with some of the most dedicated, and hard-working professors I could have ever asked for.

My freshman year I thought I knew everything, and I was sure that I knew what my future would hold.

As time when on however, my experiences with you and the Saint Leo staff began to change me. I became a student who listened, one who could put aside her own thoughts and beliefs to hear what someone else had to say.

I could accept that throughout my life I will be wrong and make mistakes, but that I can use constructive criticism to learn and grow from these experiences. Most importantly, I could admit that I knew so little.

By the time I was nearing the end of my degree, I could fully appreciate the Saint Leo Core Values.

Standing here today, I am a better person, as are all of you.

Everyone here has grown and learned, helping each other and fostering friendships even from afar.

We didn't let our struggles define us, we chose our outcome through hard work and perseverance. We decided that we didn't want to blend in with the crowds, we wanted to stand out and make a difference in the world.

Everyone here has a purpose, and no matter your race, sex, or religious beliefs, we are all here to help make the world a better place.

We are strong, we are fierce, we are lions. We are Saint Leo's 2020 online graduating class!

## Biography of Commencement Speaker

Anna Murphy is originally from Warner Robins, GA. She is a wife and mother of a special need's child, whom she spends most of her time with as his caretaker.

She is graduating with a BA in Religion, having earned department honors, and will be enrolled in Saint Leo University's Master's Program in Theology this fall.

She has a special interest in apocalyptic literature and intends to pursue the field of academics with an interest in eschatology after obtaining her PhD.

She also writes poetry and is currently working on having it published. Her poetry often revolves around the subjects of mortality and human suffering, often a reflection of her lifelong battle with a debilitating disease.

While she is a practicing Catholic, her goal is to use the realm of theology to bring people of different cultures and beliefs together.

Anna has come to appreciate the world's diversity and the strengths and wisdom found among different people, taking a special interest in Japanese culture and philosophy.

She believes that people should focus more on what they share rather than pointing out what makes communities different.

Her goals for the future include educating people about each other's cultural and religious beliefs in the hopes that humans will come to better respect and appreciate one another. To work among theologians at the Vatican to promote these ideas is her dream.





By Tiffany Ertle

Commencement Speaker

I am so honored to have been chosen to speak today. I must admit something to you; I honestly never thought I would go to college. When I graduated from high school, the last thing I wanted to do was go through more schooling. I honestly had no clue what I wanted to do in life. But I did know that before I made the investment and the commitment of going to college, I wanted to be 100% sure I was on the right path. My mom, who is a teacher and is the daughter of a teacher, said to me, "Tiffany, you should be a teacher! You're so good with kids!" I laughed and said, "Yeah, right, mom, I can't stand kids!"

But I did know that I wanted to get married and be a mother. In my early 20's I met and married my husband, Corey. After nine years of marriage and countless hurdles, we welcomed our beautiful twin boys, Dominic & Damien. Their arrival made me feel complete. As it does, time flew by, and in 2014 we had the opportunity through my husband's job to relocate from Ohio to Florida. I was all too happy to sell my snowblower and buy some beach chairs instead!

Once we got to Florida, I felt we were on our way to a truly happy life. In 2015 our boys started Kindergarten, and being the helicopter mother that I am, I walked them in to school every morning. One day as I was watching them walk down the hallway to class, the secretary said I should consider becoming a substitute. I told her that I didn't have a college degree. She told me

that our district was in such need for substitutes, that all I needed was a high school diploma. So, I became a substitute at Citrus County Schools. Eventually, I figured out that my mother was right all along. I wanted to be a teacher! And I actually LOVE kids! Sorry, mom, I guess I should have listened to you all of those years ago!

In January 2016, everything changed. After several years with his employer, my husband was let go. With my work as a substitute and some assistance from unemployment, we made it through the months it took him to find a new and better job. I decided that I needed to attend college and get a degree so that my family and I would be more secure in our future. That summer, I decided to enroll at Saint Leo to pursue my Bachelor's in Elementary Education. As a busy wife and mother to twin boys who worked full-time substituting at their school, I needed the flexibility that Saint Leo's online classes me.

So that Fall, I worked on my classes while balancing working full-time as a substitute teacher, caring for my children, husband, and pets as well as working part-time as a freelance photographer. My hard work paid off in 2018, and I earned my Associate of Arts degree. I even walked in the Gainesville commencement ceremony to celebrate my achievement!

While pursuing my AA, I took two amazing history classes, and it was those two classes that made me realize I wanted to be a history teacher! I changed my major, and with that, my residence. I became an Adult Education student at the main campus! I was so excited to be able to attend classes at the campus as I never thought I would be a real college student! I'll be honest, there were a few times that I was mistaken for a member of Faculty, but that was ok. I just told them I was an "alternative aged student." I made several friends at the campus and even felt welcomed by the "kids" in my classes. I tried to help them as much as I could and be a support to them when they needed me.

I took the dreaded General Knowledge test the following January and passed every subtest the first time around, except for the Math. Math is my kryptonite. I have taken the test two additional times and still have not passed it. But I wouldn't let that stop me from reaching my goal! I changed my degree to Educational Studies:

Education and Adolescence- Social Sciences determined to finish what I started! I switched back to the online platform and took my last four classes online, returning to where I started. Through all of the ups and downs, the stress and the heartache, I never gave up.

And that is the message I want to impart to you today. No matter what life hands you, never give up. No matter how hard it might seem, you can do anything you set your mind to accomplish. Every morning you have two choices: Continue to sleep with your dreams or wake up and chase them. Because as Eleanor Roosevelt eloquently said, "The future belongs

to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Thank you to my husband Corey, my sons Dominic & Damien, and our families for supporting me in the many ways you have through this process. I love you all more than I can ever say.

Thank you to my Professors, University Supervisors, Cooperating Teachers, and classmates for all of your guidance and support. And finally, congratulations to my fellow Graduates...I wish you all the best of luck as you follow your dreams and remember, all our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.

## Biography of Commencement Speaker

Tiffany N. Ertle was born in Steubenville, Ohio, and grew up in the small town of Jewett, Ohio. She graduated from Jewett-Scio High School in 1997. In 2014, she moved with her family to Homosassa, Florida from Powell, Ohio where she volunteered as a Docent at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

She is graduating cum laude with a BA in Educational Studies: Education & Adolescence – Social Sciences. Tiffany was inducted into Kappa Delta Pi as well as the Alpha Delta Alpha Chapter in 2018. She was awarded the Community Core Value Award in January of 2018 for exemplifying the Saint Leo University Core Value of Community. She has served as a National History Fair Judge for Pasco County Schools during her time at Saint Leo.

For the last five years, Tiffany has worked as a substitute teacher as well as volunteered for the Citrus County School District. Tiffany is the eldest daughter of Debra Swope and Tyson Horshok; Mother to twin boys Dominic & Damien; Wife to Corey. Joining her to celebrate today in addition to her mother, sons & husband are her grandfather James Reese and second parents, Dave & Michelle Ertle, cherished former student Iliana Hamlin and her mother Ivy, as well as other treasured family and friends.

Her goal after graduation is to obtain a teaching position in a middle school where she can make history relevant and engaging to her students as well as build relationships with her students that will help create a memorable experience for them to look back on.

Tiffany would like to recognize the professors who had an immense impact on her during her time at Saint Leo University:

Professor Laurie Muffley – Online Adjunct Professor  
 Dr. Beryl Diamond – Online Adjunct Professor  
 Professor Carrie Frump – Adjunct Professor  
 Professor Beverly Ledbetter – Adjunct Professor  
 Professor Rachel Hernandez – Adjunct Professor  
 Dr. John McTague – University Professor  
 Professor Debra Cross – Adjunct Professor  
 Dr. Luis Garcia – Adjunct Professor





# Commencement Speech



By Maxwell Kizewski

Commencement Speaker

Good Morning, I am honored to be presented with the opportunity of being the Student Speaker for the 2020 Commencement Ceremony... But in all honesty, I am even more honored to be bestowed the opportunity to be in the presence of everyone here today.

With all of the challenges that we have been presented with this past semester, including the barriers imposed upon us with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is absolutely amazing to be with the parents, grandparents, siblings and beloved friends of the brilliant graduates that fill this room.

Without your loving support, we certainly would not be where we are today.

This morning, I wish to focus on a concept that all of us in this room know all too well. The concept of making decisions— and I would like to encourage us to take these next few moments to reminisce on the choices we have made and the ones that are soon to shine above our horizons.

As a student graduating from the honors program, one of my favorite Greek Myths is “The Choice of Hercules”. As Former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett best summarizes it, “the legend depicts Hercules stopping at

a fork in the road where two angelic figures stood.

One figure told him that her road was smooth and pleasant, with nothing that will stand in his way.

In contrast, the other figure pointed towards her road and told Hercules she could only promise the traveler nothing but what his own labor and strength would yield. He then chose the latter of the two.”

This timeless story of Greek lore shows that even since the Classical epoch of human existence, people have toiled with the concept of having to make hard decisions.

As God’s creations, we have been blessed to have woven into the fabric of the human condition the ability to critically think and ponder choices that lay before us.

Of course, there are trivial choices that we make in our daily lives. Choices like deciding when to wake up, when to go to bed and how we spend our time all play a role in defining who we are.

But these aren’t the most difficult of choices that we are faced with.. In fact, we are all gathered here today to celebrate the success of the challenging decision to further our education and come to Saint Leo University.

Now, we are about to embark on a new kind adventure—one that is full of decisions that many of us have never encountered before.

As refreshing as a new beginning may seem, this moment marks the true beginning of our young lives.

that’s a daunting thought, isn’t it?

The question that follows is how do we make the right decisions in situations that will likely set the trajectory of our futures?

Sure, we know that we will all face adversity, but how do we overcome it?

I believe that this can be answered in one simple word that we Lions are all familiar with—Excellence. <pause>

Excellence is notably one of Saint Leo University’s prized Core Values and our institution uniquely defines Excellence as “All of us, individually and collectively, work hard to ensure that our students develop the character, learn the skills, and assimilate the knowledge essential to become morally responsible leaders”.

These underlying principles of character, skill, and knowledge are guiding factors that have molded our intuition and our values as Saint Leo Lions since the day we stepped on campus.

Character - a unique reflection of each family member, peer, mentor and close friend that you have met throughout your academic journey.

Skill - a display of precision and drive in your personally crafted ideology that makes you more than a name on a job application.

Knowledge - an internal festival of personal ingenuity, where information lead to thoughts, thoughts to inspiration and inspiration springing into life-changing actions.

These three simple guiding principles that are firmly planted in the bedrock of our institution can be found in each and every member of the Class of 2020.

Choosing a path of

excellence is not always going to be easy ladies and gentlemen—but like Hercules, we can decide to use excellence as a tool to navigate us through the whips and scorns of life.

We will face difficulty on our indelible paths, but know that with each step through difficulty, we step closer to defining who we are and what we are meant to be.

I hope that when we all face difficulty and challenges, that we think back on this moment, on our college experiences, on who we are as Saint Leo Graduates and open ourselves to allowing excellence to serve as the eternal thread that will guide us forward in the tenor of our daily lives. The choice is ultimately ours to make.

Without further adieu, President Senese, distinguished faculty, and beloved guests, I would like to present to you the Class of 2020—the future business leaders, law enforcement officers, teachers, writers, scientists and intellectuals that the world needs now more than ever- and with the knowledge that Saint Leo University has bestowed upon us in our minds and with Excellence burning in our hearts, I can say with great pride and conviction that the Class of 2020 will be the class that will make the choice to change the world. Thank you.







**By Tiffany Ertle**

Commencement Speaker

Good Afternoon, as I look out onto this crowd I am reminded of a quote that I came across. I never did find the author, but it really speaks to me here.

“It’s not where you are in life, it’s who you have by your side that matters.” – Unknown

I want to start off by saying congratulations and thank you to President Senese, faculty, staff, and administrators of Saint Leo, and to the families and friends here supporting us, and congratulations to us, the class of 2020! Applause

We did it! We have reached the pinnacle of our efforts and hard work. I know for myself, it has been a ten-year partnership with Saint Leo.

I say partnership because Saint Leo is a close-knit community. I chose Saint Leo like many of you because of the core values it represents and because of the family and community atmosphere.

It is through this family at Saint Leo, the support of my own family, and the friendship and support of my cohort that I stand before you here today.

I was recently asked what it meant to me to be the first to receive a doctorate in my department here at St. Leo and why did I want to get the degree? The answers to both questions are very related.

As an online middle school teacher, I am faced with a special set of challenges.

There is a large gap in the research dealing with the barriers that exist for online middle school students.

There is simply a lot that we have to learn about how to deliver a system that provides every student the best possible opportunity to succeed.

This is why I decided to pursue an advanced degree. I simply wanted to arm myself with the capability to attack the problems I faced every day and to make a difference for myself as well as other online teachers.

Fortunately, I found what I was looking for here at St. Leo. The core values and program orientation were exactly what I needed.

I was encouraged by the faculty here at Saint Leo to pursue my research. They have supported me every step of the way.

My research here has afforded me an opportunity to be a leader in establishing strategies and methods that best assist the online student.

I continue my research today to close the gap in overcoming the barriers that exist for the online middle school student so they may be successful in their online classes.

And, this is why I am so proud and happy to be part of the first class to graduate. Carrying my St. Leo credentials into the workplace as I continue my research has been my dream.

In the Dept of Graduate Education here at Saint Leo, as in the other departments here, students form close bonds with their learning community.

Those of us here today earning our Doctorate degree representing the Dept. of Education have worked side by side for many years forming a lasting bond and deep friendship with each other as well as the professors and staff who have guided us every step of the way.

There were many times all of us have fallen only to be picked back up by either our

instructors, our families, or each other. We are a strong cohort, and we are here today because of that unwavering support of our own families as well as our Saint Leo family.

It has been a long journey, but we have made it through with teamwork. Dr. Aefsky, our Director of Graduate Studies and Dr. Carver were our fearless leaders.

Dr. Aefsky gave our cohort this little statue for our desks that reminds one that indeed it takes teamwork. (Describe it) I still have it there sitting proudly on my desk. I am sure the rest of my cohort has theirs out on their desks as well.

Dr. Aefsky told us from the beginning of our journey that we would make it, she would not let us quit, and that our cohort (each other) was our strongest asset. Boy, did she mean that! Dr Aefsky, Dr. Carver, Dr. Lamb, and Dr. Mukherjee tirelessly worked to make sure we persevered.

There were many late-night phone conversations among the cohort where we were sounding boards for each other, offering words of wisdom or inspiration to keep going—don’t give up.

Crying or mad emoticons went back and forth. But our cohort was instrumental in helping each of us succeed. Even though we were in an online program, we still developed deep and lasting relationships. It is hard to go it alone, and one thing I can definitely say, we are stronger together.

We are a community and we are definitely stewards to each other. I can also tell you that there were many after hours conversations with our department chairs as well.

I know at times we didn’t make it easy on Dr. Aefsky and Dr. Carver, but they patiently guided us through. We had a phrase Dr. Aefsky and Carver made us repeat throughout the program,

“Done by December.” (2019) Well, we weren’t quite done by December, but we darn well got done within months of that.

Those Saint Leo core values and family! (shaking head)

Having the opportunity to work online at Saint Leo helps students stay connected and grow even through the toughest of times such as this recent scare we have all endured around the world where we were asked to self-isolate to prevent illness.

The Saint Leo family encourages us to work on ourselves and help each other in times like these rather than succumb to fears of things out of our control.

Saint Leo encourages community, and it is through community and acts of kindness and compassion for each other that we persevere through rough times.

Many of you here today will start a new chapter in your career. Some of you will continue on with your education. Whichever path you are on, remember that you have that LION Pride and core values instilled in you.

Strive for that excellence, community, respect, personal development, stewardship, and integrity in all you do.

The Saint Leo family has provided you with what you need to climb that ladder of success and reach your goals, follow your passions, and stay on the path you set for yourself.

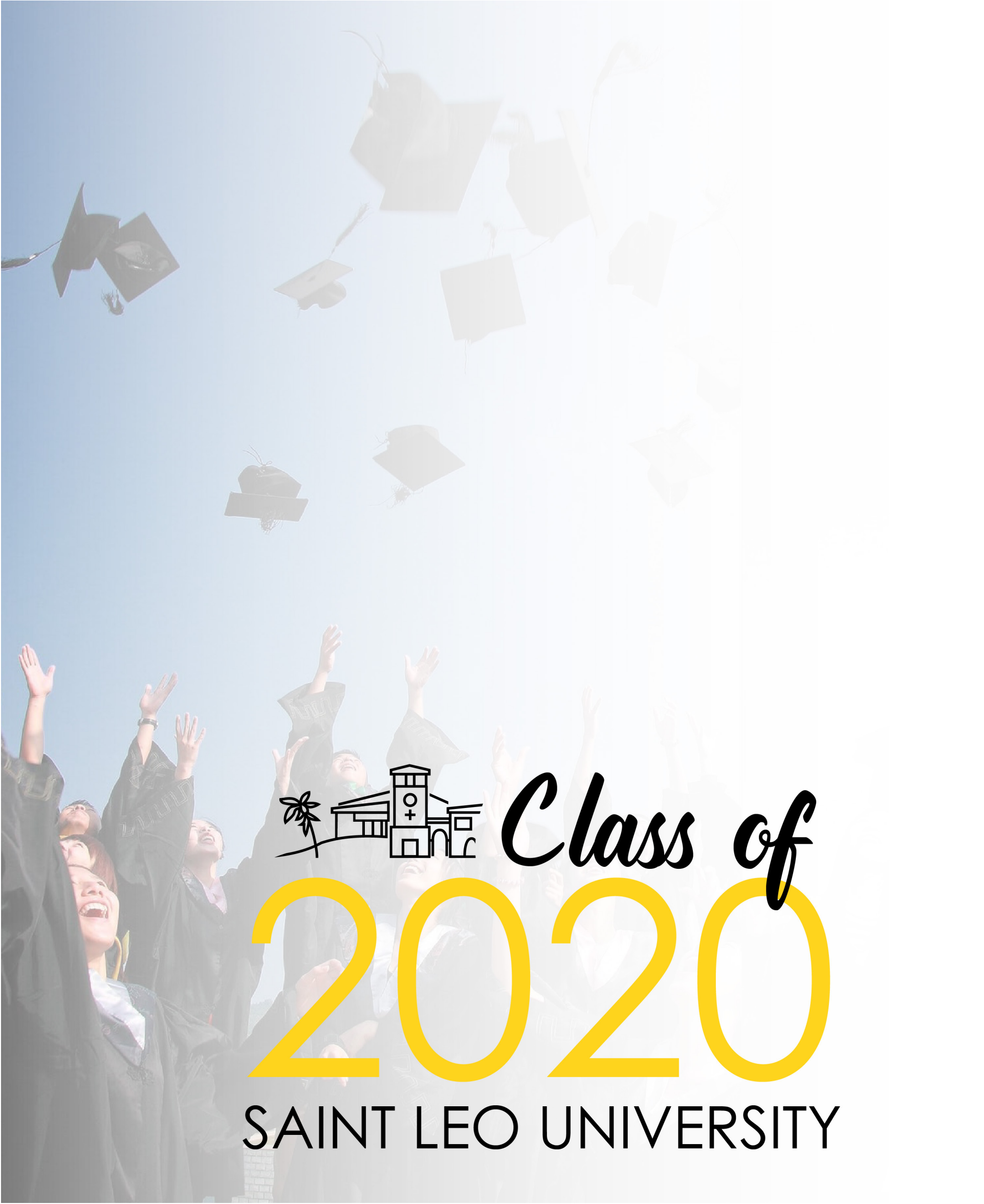
Most importantly, stay true to who you are. Remember, you are and always will be a LION. I want to leave you with a quote from Elizabeth Warren:

“Knowing who you are will help you when it’s time to fight. Fight for the job you want, fight for the people who mean the most to you and fight for the kind of world you want to live in.

It will help when people say that’s impossible or you can’t do that.

Look, if you take the unexpected opportunities when they come up, if you know yourself, and if you fight for what you believe in, I can promise that you will live a life that is rich with meaning.”

**Thank you and congratulations 2020 graduates!**



*Class of*

2020

SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY