

“A United Flame”

Nicole Miah

Bachelor of Science in Business- Finance

Good afternoon, EIU! I would like to welcome our families, friends, faculty, administration, and graduation class to today’s special event. We would not have been here today if it were not for your encouragement, leadership, and support. At the time of speech preparation, we were wondering if we would be fortunate enough to have an in-person ceremony or if we would, once again, have one online. Personally, I am so happy we can all be together today! No matter the scenario, we are truly blessed to have our health and lives ahead of us. To simply say the 2021 graduating class has been challenged, is an understatement. Our class has made it through extraordinary times that have tested our abilities, patience, and sanity. I am sure our families are glad we have finally crossed the finish line!

The results of the pandemic have brought about various academic, physical, and mental challenges. However, those challenges did not break us. In fact, they have only made us stronger, united individuals. We are the flame that has kept burning, kept going, and kept striving. As a class, we showed up, whether that be virtually or in-person, and faced the hardships and opportunities that come with everyday education. The constant hours of studying and preparation have led us to this very moment of accomplishment.

Our experience here at Eastern Illinois University has been a memorable one. Not many graduates can say they had a close connection with their professors and a personal acquaintance is something I value and felt Eastern delivered. Being able to walk in or email a professor with a quick question, is something that brought about respect and importance for the students they are committed to. While being raised in a small, rural town, I was unfamiliar with many different

beliefs and backgrounds. Over the past two years, I have met and grown in ways that have strengthened my personal attitude towards others. EIU has exposed us to a great amount of diversity that has impacted my classmates and I's lives for the better. Interacting with an assortment of people during group projects has allowed us to be more understanding, more communicative, and more aware of others' viewpoints. This is critical in the success of our careers and lives.

Amongst the university's core values are collaboration, diversity, and involvement. These values have led and taught us, as students, to be more independent, caring individuals. The faculty and administration have worked endlessly to provide a quality education that has kept us healthy through online, hybrid, and face-to-face classes in the safest manner possible. Their ability to come together to ensure a positive environment for all students is what teaches us to look at various perspectives and communicate a common solution with others. A unique amount of cultures and personalities lead to a constant progression in ones' future. Engagement is a huge factor in contributing to the success of our careers in any profession. At EIU, we have been encouraged to get involved, whether that be in sports, academics, or activities outside the classroom. The benefits have steered my classmates and I towards new friends and networks that will last a lifetime.

After today, this class will face challenges in a world divided by political, economic, and cultural perspectives. We are prepared to be great citizens and leaders to the next generation. We have been taught to be understanding, to come together for a common purpose. Our awareness of contrary viewpoints has prepared us for wherever we may go or decide to be. It is our obligation to better society in ways that bring about a prosperous world.

Each of us have a choice on where the future takes us. Our education has prepared us to face the world with an intelligent, strong mind-set that will contribute to a sustainable world. The Lumpkin College of Business and Technology has taught us to strive for our personal dreams and aspirations. The opportunities for success are endless and as a graduating class, we understand the importance of learning, the obligation of values, and the expectation of happiness. Today, we take time to thank our professors, advisors, and administration for the passion they have passed onto us. A passion that we will bring forth into our careers, doing what we love. After this day, we can happily look back and say, "I am a proud graduate of Eastern Illinois University."

A popular quote from Winston Churchill signifies all the hard work and dedication we have put forth up until this moment. "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." I believe this inspires us to keep being positive about our situations. No matter where life takes us after today, we must be excited and passionate about finding what makes us happy. We are capable of meeting deadlines, passing semesters, and working towards a career. There is so much more out there that will allow us to grow and find achievement. Take time to be appreciative of all you have accomplished and take time to thank your neighbor, your friends, family, and faculty for getting you to where you are today. They are the motivation that drives your ambitions. Congratulations, class of 2021! I wish you all the best of luck.