We made it. Eighty-eight credits, three years, and one law degree brought us to this stage. Three years ago we were just pliable handfuls of cookie dough\(^1\), waiting for the process to start, and hoping someone on this campus knew how to bake. Three years ago, when we were sitting in our first law school class, this day seemed unimaginable. Three years ago – before we instinctively answered every question with “It depends,” when we had half-baked ideas about what being a lawyer actually meant, before we started seeing personal injury cases every time we walked into the grocery store, and before we became the “probable cause” expert in our friend group. Today they combine all of the ingredients and hand us the keys to the next great milestone in our lives ...that nasty Bar Exam that we won’t speak of again today...and the ability to practice law. Practicing law - the privilege of standing before a court with the trust of our client, the knowledge gained from three years of legal education, and the confidence of knowing we have earned that moment.

Have the challenges ended? Is it magically going to get easier? I won’t lie to you but I will say, sometimes when you’re finished working hard, you have to work a little bit harder.

Looking back on the path that brought us here today - the classes, the professors, the study groups, the printing credits, the cold calls, and the overpriced textbooks. It all might seem like a blurry recipe for disaster.

But hopefully for everyone, law school is a blur with a few highlights. Like when you first really wondered what the ‘Elements’ class is. The first time someone in class told your professor, “Well that outcome isn’t fair,” only to have him respond “well these are courts of law, not courts of justice.” When you realized that the professor knowing your name did not serve up the ‘A’ you expected, and often just left you standing up alone in class questioning the statement you just made. The moment when your section’s gunner lost steam and finally stopped raising his hand – the gift and the curse. Or when you discovered that a professor who, “hates IRAC,” actually loves “IRAC,” they just hate reading bad law school exams. The first time you heard a professor describe their exam as a four letter word that starts with “F” ... FAIR - you might as well drop that class. Maybe you remember the first outline you received, and how it

\(^{1}\) *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chosen* (Mutant Enemy 2003).
felt like Christmas morning. Or the exact second when you decided that the Bluebook was indeed the most ridiculous book you had ever owned. The intermittent internet connection when you were trying to submit an assignment on TWEN or more likely, trying to show your friends a YouTube video on the bricks. I’m sorry... the BASS Bricks. When you survived your first year, and were finally able to schedule your own classes. Has anyone considered what they are going to do when their employer asks them to work on a Friday?

Recall 2L year, when you thought your plate was too full because of internships, externships, law journals, working as a Dean’s Fellow or in a Clinic, moot court competitions, endless student organization meetings, or being the all-around law clerk for your office? And you attempted to balance all of this while professors gave increasingly detailed lectures about more complex cases and issues. Or maybe just you remember the final night before a law school exam, when you had just finished your sixth cup of free coffee, reviewed your outline for the last time, erased the entire white board full of notes and summaries your study group made, and finally felt the light bulb flicker on in your head.

For those of us who spent less time studying and more time with “extracurriculars,” looking back reveals different memories. You probably remember networking events in Brickell. Gatherings at Monty’s. Socials at the Rat. Less structured events in the Grove, on Miracle Mile, or South Beach. Dean’s Cup parties with the Medical School. Let’s just talk about Dean’s Cup for a moment, our annual competition with the Medical School. Even though our shirts had the wrong date on them, even though we’ve lost the last four years in a row, we went out there every year and competed, and above all – we had fun together.

Even with all of our academic pursuits and socials, there is no way our look back could forget the pillars of our law school, the individuals who keep this place running, and made law school easier to digest. Beatrice and Sabrina, in the Events and Conferences Office, who always know where the best food is going to be. Detra, in the Office of the Dean, who seems to have an ambiguous job description but always has a warm smile and a kind word to give. Dean Cox and Jessie in the Career Development Office who sent us crucial job information. Shakira, in the Admissions Office, who reminded us to give back to the university that was giving us an
education. The Student Development advisors who listened to us rant about the struggles of law school more than once...definitely more than twice. The Reference Librarians who obviously know we are asking them questions we are supposed to be researching ourselves. The security guards who opened classrooms for us. And all of the assistants who sent us powerpoints, accepted fashionably late assignments, talked professors into review sessions, and let us place take-home exams on the bottom of the pile so it looked like we turned our exam in first and not last.

Lest we forget those who truly sacrificed so that we may learn. Our families and friends. The people who pretended to enjoy hearing our reflections on lectures and case summaries. The people who suffered through our undergraduate woes, watched us torture ourselves with LSAT study, and still told us they’d be there for us during our law school careers. The care packages, the phone calls, text messages, hashtags, google chats, snap chats, inspirational quotes on Instagram, prayers, and their unyielding loyalty and support are what got us here.

Their support will always be with us, even as we look forward to a future with our promising careers. When we draft our first motions that do not have to be signed by a supervising attorney. When we argue that first motion in court and can actually record a billable hour for it. When we win our first case. Open the doors to our own firms. Travel around the globe to help those in need. Teach tomorrow’s brightest law students. And maybe even one day, wear the robes as an arbiter of justice.

I’ll ask you to look back one last time, to moments when you first started on the path to this stage – when you walked off the stage at your last graduation, when you left the LSAT testing room, when you received your acceptance letter, and when you first sat in orientation. That spirit is not gone. That dedication has not escaped you. Persevering through this baking process we call law school, and becoming an attorney is about strength. It’s hard, and it’s difficult, and it’s every day. It’s what we have to do. And we can do it together\(^2\), just like the last three years. Thank you.

\(^2\) *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Amends* (Mutant Enemy 1998).