Welcome friends, family, faculty, deans, and guests. I feel privileged to speak on behalf of the Class of 2011, many of whom I am proud to call my good friends and future colleagues.

The significance of today evokes several emotions for us. We may feel elation that years of grueling academic work are ending. We may feel sadness that we will no longer see each other daily. And perhaps we all feel some anxiety about returning here in two months for the bar. Yet, as we celebrate today, I hope we all share in a feeling of pride: pride in ourselves, pride in our school, and pride in each other.

Personally, I found law school a humbling experience. I was proud of my undergraduate education and felt prepared for whatever law school would throw my way. Then, when I met many of you in that intimidating line to pick up our orientation packages, I realized quickly that we were a talented and ambitious group.

I also remember my first law school class. Everyone was terrified. Everyone wanted to say the right thing. Our professors indicated that the right answer didn’t always exist but we had this nagging feeling that maybe the right answer was whatever that Gunner said. But now we leave with impressive credentials: We are Con Law enthusiasts, IP connoisseurs, charismatic trial attorneys, and health law advocates. I can’t wait for our success and to declare proudly, “We went to Suffolk Law School together.”

Of course, these days, maintaining our pride as lawyers is not an easy task. We all have those pesky friends that send us articles declaring, “The market is terrible for lawyers!” or “Pessimism abounds for graduating law students!” Even before law school, I can’t imagine I was the only one who faced a barrage of bad lawyer jokes. So what are we doing here? What could we possibly contribute to the world?

It turns out, we can contribute a lot. When we are surrounded by successful people in law school, in Boston and Cambridge we can easily forget the privileges we have and our unique position to advise and contribute to the world. Yet a quick walk beyond our beautiful building reveals the challenges we face: We see wealth and income disparities in the streets surrounding our school.

A stroll over to Beacon Hill reminds us that several groups political, religious, educational, and social are still fighting to be heard. And in a city of intellectuals, we have access to academics whose works shed light on the world’s hardship. Our profession does not hear joyful news daily, but we can provide a voice and solutions for those who need them.
When the world is pessimistic about our professional future, it’s hard to remember why we started down this career path. Many of us owe our success and motivation to members of our audience today. Our parents, siblings, friends, extended family, teachers, employers, and mentors have all provided us with experiences and opportunities that have shaped our identities.

Like many of you, I have a small entourage of well-wishers here to celebrate with me. However, my family’s delegation is one person short. Just after Thanksgiving this past year, I lost my father. He was a human rights activist and the primary reason I became interested in law and justice. Throughout my childhood, he demonstrated how we could change the world and give a voice to the voiceless, but he always emphasized lawyers’ integral role in that process. He was so proud that I wanted to follow in his footsteps, but that I could do so much more because, unlike him, I would be armed with a law degree.

My parents are the reason I am here today. When I found the law school application process daunting, my parents—a dependable cheerleaders—reminded me of my dream, of the value that lawyers could bring to the world, and encouraged me to stick with it. If you know anything about growing up Indian, you know that this encouragement is phenomenal—and progressive. Truth exists in the stereotype that Indian parents encourage their children to pursue medicine or engineering—and if you have any doubt, try visiting a hospital without a Dr. Patel or a Dr. Khan. I have always been grateful for this non-traditional path.

As Isaac Newton wrote famously, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." We can see our future because we stand on the shoulders of our parents and countless teachers and mentors. They have made our dreams possible. Because of them, we have made it through law school, and we will make it through the bar. The world is ready for our solutions, and I can’t wait for us to offer them.

Finally, I want to thank the Class of 2011 for making the last few years truly memorable. I have learned something from each of you. For those of you I haven’t met, I hope that our professional interactions and reunions will be opportunities for us to know each other. I am heartened by the sight of Suffolk alumni bonding over their time here. When we sent in our deposits to Suffolk, we signed on not just for the three or four year deal, but for a lifetime of friendship, lawyering, and learning. Congratulations, Class of 2011!