



# Castleton University

Good morning parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, educators, and good morning to the Castleton University Class of 2017! Again, my name is Daniel Warnecke, and it is truly an honor to be speaking in front of all of you this morning. Castleton always treats its students with the upmost respect, and I believe that we will all see that in action today during this incredible ceremony.

I was lucky enough to grow up just about 15 minutes away from Castleton University in a small town called Poultney, Vermont. After graduating from Poultney High School, I made my way to Burlington, Vermont to study business at UVM. The first few weeks in Burlington were challenging in many ways, I guess you could say, and I knew that I was not meant to be there. So, after a lot of hard thinking and calls to mom, I decided to pack up my bags, yet again, and head toward home—and that home became, and still is, and always will be Castleton University. Now, looking back at that time, I know I made the best decision of my life when I transferred to Castleton. It's hard to describe this small University with a big heart in just a few words, but defining the Castleton Way is a good place to start.

The “Castleton Way,” a term coined by President Dave Wolk, is a representation of respect, service and honor for one's own self, the Castleton University community, and the extended communities that Castleton resides within. It is not something that is taken lightly within these walls, and because of this, the Castleton Way makes itself known everywhere you look. One can walk from the Campus Center over to the Calvin Coolidge Library and know every person, professor and administrator who walks by him by name. During that short walk, one can also find himself being asked how an exam went, how the day is going, or even just experience a smile on another face—something so simple, yet so empowering and reassuring in both good and bad times. The fruition of this phrase does not stop there, however. Many Castleton University students, clubs and athletic organizations can also be seen serving their surrounding communities in different ways. Whether it be raking a lawn, giving blood, rounding up thousands of food donations for Giving Tuesday, or even traveling around the country and world to serve those less fortunate than themselves, Castleton Students are there—bringing the Castleton Way beyond university walls. This community commitment has created a college experience I will never forget.

Fellow graduating seniors, my guess is that life is not always going to be as simple as the life we have had at Castleton University. I know, it's easy to get used to the comforts of college, and that's okay. Yet we are definitely going to experience emotions and hardships that we have not had to deal with during our time here. But I know that we are all ready for this, and I know that we can get through these next life steps after graduation if we collectively remember where we came from. We were all lucky enough to experience Castleton as students, and were lucky enough to also experience the positive impacts of carrying out the Castleton Way. Take everything you have learned from this amazing University in the heart of the Green Mountains and run with it. Many students graduating



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from other schools and universities are not as blessed as a Castleton University graduate—always remember that.

Now, on behalf of the Class of 2017 and the entire Castleton University community, it is truly my honor to recognize a man who is the personification of the Castleton Way. President Wolk, probably one of the most humble men that I know, has had such a huge impact on the entire Castleton University community for the past 16 years. He has worked tirelessly to build up this beautiful University, both emotionally and physically, and I know that every life that he has touched is truly thankful. I can speak for everybody here today when I say that you deserve all the recognition in the world for everything that you have done here at Castleton. We wish you a full, exciting, and importantly, a relaxing retirement, President Wolk. Thank you for everything!