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**2017 Albany High School Graduation**  
**Speech by Salutatorian Emily Ha**  
**June 25, 2017**

Hello, class of 2017! I'd like to take a brief moment to thank everyone who has made this day possible: parents, teachers, administrators, and, of course, students.

Allow me to begin by posing a deceptively simple question: What is success? We have all obviously experienced success – evidenced by our presence here today – but there is no one singular path that led us here. Oxford Dictionary defines success as “the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.” The term is purposefully broad, as people experience life differently, and thus, reasonably, find achievement in different ways.

Albany High School is a highly diverse environment. Our student body is constructed of people from all walks of life – different religions, ethnicities, race, backgrounds, and upbringings, all converging and interacting in one building. Each of us has experienced our own struggles these past four years – mental health, familial relations, college applications, work, school – I cannot hope to name all the challenges that we've faced. And as we are here today, celebrating the final stepping stone in our high school careers, I would like to highlight the many other ways that we find the fruits of our labors.

Not every task ends with a number on a paper or a diploma. Some rewards are intangible. With all the testing, and the rankings, sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the numbers of it all. But the human experience is not measurable. These years were not merely important for the scores you received but for the memories you created and the friends you made, the lessons you learned both in and out of class. They are the people you have impacted and the people who have impacted you. You are wholly unique and isn't that an accomplishment?

What then, is success? Well, it's what you make it out to be. Success is relative: You may face certain setbacks that make an accomplishment more meaningful. You may face challenges that others can only dream of. We all start at different points on our path, and it is unfair to compare your beginning with another person's middle or end. As I stand before you today, I recognize that there are many others in front of me who have performed much greater feats. Celebrate yourself comparative to no one but yourself, since no one has experienced the same life as you. Success can be found not just in life's greater events, but in everyday places. Do not take these for granted. If there is one thing that I can leave you with – one thing that it has taken me far too long to realize and that I am still learning – is to live each day for yourself and your successes, regardless of the expectations of others.

That being said, congratulations for completing your high school career! Whether your plans for the future are concrete or a little uncertain, I wish everyone good luck with whatever you pursue. Thank you!