



*From the Office of the President*

**John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.**  
REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

**John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.**  
**Winter Commencement Address**  
**Colorado Convention Center**  
**Saturday, December 10, 2016**

Hello, Regis University Winter Class of 2016! I'd like to acknowledge and thank our Trustees here today, our Provost, Deans, Vice Presidents and all faculty and staff. You are the lifeblood of our University. I am honored to share this stage with you.

You graduates have cause to celebrate: papers are all written, exams are passed, requirements fulfilled and diplomas nearly in hand. But the ultimate gauge of the success of a Regis education is not a grade or a diploma, but the quality of life that you choose to live – how and who you choose to be in the world.

You are now women and men educated in the Regis and Jesuit Traditions. You are the value added to society by your Jesuit Catholic education. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, wrote to a friend, “The Society of Jesus hopes by means of its work in education to pour into society persons capable of leaving it for good.” Today, we are “pouring” you into society.

Of course many of you have been pouring your hearts and minds into society already. Let me share three examples of students graduating today, who are already leaving society better off:

**Laura Dravenstott** is graduating from Regis with a Masters of Fine Arts. Laura received her undergraduate degree in English from Harvard and after graduating she landed a job in business – a job that would forever alter the path of her life.

She began her career as a trainer for a consulting company, helping new employees learn the computer systems. It took her to Manila, Guam, Mexico City, Singapore and India. Laura says:

“At the time, the travel exposed me to a part of the world I had no idea of – the poverty,” she said. “I remember riding in a bus in India and seeing people sleeping on top, under and all around these pipes. That aspect changed my life more than anything. And that’s what I write about.”

While pursuing her master’s degree in creative writing from Regis, she began volunteering in Denver with detained immigrants. After volunteering at a detention center in Aurora, she knew these immigrant stories had to be told. Laura talks to immigrants and writes fictionalized stories of



their experiences. Laura is using both of her degrees to educate the world about the immigrant experience.

**Clayton Gonzales** earned his Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies at Regis, while serving in the United States Armed Service, and he now graduates with a Master's in Counseling.

Raised in a family that taught Clayton the important values of providing service to others, he began his service in the Army National Guard and was sent to aid the people of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Moved deeply by this experience, he dedicated himself to further service by joining the United States Army. In April of 2009, Clayton was deployed to Iraq and charged with the duty to protect innocent people from a war-torn country. He has described this time in the Iraqi desert as being marked by great trial, tribulation, loss, and enduring redemptive faith.

Deeply impacted by what he witnessed in Iraq, Clayton's passion for serving others led him back to Regis to pursue a career in counseling. Clayton has spent the past 5 years working with homeless youth. In his own words, Clayton possesses a "fire within that burns for the marginalized and those that are in most need of mental health services, supportive relationships, and human connection." Clayton says:

"On a daily basis, I get to build relationships with kids who tell a story of hurt, pain, anger, and trauma. My own trauma story is enriched when my narrative and theirs unconsciously become intertwined, and a relationship is built in both conscious and unconscious worlds. Trying to see them in their wholeness, and not simply by their behavior, their attitude, their appearance or smell, I strive to meet them where they are in their journey."

Clayton is Regis: an intelligent, discerning man of great faith, gentle heart, and fiercely dedicated to serving and protecting those most in need.

**Cedar Bellows** is graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biology AND a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies. Not only is she graduating with a double major, but Cedar has played on the volleyball team the past four years and has a cumulative GPA of 3.7!

Cedar took a break from college early on in her career to have her son, Colt, but returned to us and has balanced being a student-athlete, a mom and a double major. Throughout her time as a student athlete, her coach – Frank Lavrisha – reflects that Cedar was late only once. This includes 6:00 a.m. spring training sessions, dropping Colt off at daycare before, and making sure she completed her studies, which she did after putting Colt to bed. Cedar had a sleeping bag in her locker and would occasionally grab a nap on the floor of the locker room as needed.



Cedar's coach recalls, "During one of our player conferences and in response to my question, 'How do you make it work?', Cedar replied, 'With all the time demands, I learned to be fully present with the task at hand.'" This is quite a lesson coming from your classmate.

Cedar aspires to be a Physician's Assistant and we have no doubt she will achieve this and much more.

These are stories of scholarship and service that represent the work so many of you have done. In today's world, it can be so tempting to be motivated by our culture of power, prestige, wealth, and self-gratification. But your Regis Jesuit Catholic education - of mind and heart - has prepared you to pursue a life that genuinely nourishes the body, mind and spirit. However you may measure success now, let me encourage you to stay open to the possibility that you, like many of us, may have it all wrong. Resolve now to graciously accept a new and deeper awareness of what really counts - when it comes - as a grace, a gift given to you so that you might enjoy that "full and more abundant life" that is God's sure promise to those who live with integrity and passion.

Congratulations to all of you. You made it! This is your day! Graduates of Regis University, my charge to you is this:

- There will always be obstacles. Let nothing stand in your way.
- Follow your heart and trust that God has a plan.
- And most importantly, always remember that your degree from Regis University is more than a certificate of completion. A Regis degree is a promise to yourself and to the world. It's a promise that you will use your gifts and skills to make the world a more humane and just place.

Thank you for making us proud. It is a joy to give you the best Christmas gift ever!

Congratulations again, and welcome to the Regis University alumni association.