

Good evening faculty, staff, friends, family, and my fellow GD18 grads.

Originally, my first order of business was to bring Guarav on stage to present his impromptu speech, but he assured me he had no interest in presenting anything. So I will summarize his speech here. [Um, well, uh, you see, ok, thanks.]

But in all honesty, Guarav has become an excellent speaker throughout the course of the year, even if he doesn't yet know it himself. And I think that's the case for a lot of us. We came to VFS to learn game design, yet we are leaving with so much more.

Prior to VFS, I'd barely played any games. So I made it a point to spend as much time as possible in the arcade doing "research." Throughout the year, I've played everything from shooters and fighting games to RPGs and rhythm games, and I've learned a surprising amount about myself through the games I played.

But when it comes time for life lessons, I still go back to my old favorite: Mario.

You see, Mario taught me that no matter how small you are, you can still jump around and get some coins.

And that's where we are now. We're the small guys in the gaming industry, fresh out of school and ready to work long hours for little pay. But don't think that just because we're small that we can't have a big impact. So keep jumping, because you just might surprise yourself.

I remember one of our first assignments at VFS, which was to come up with a list of 25 different board game ideas. I came in the next morning not having thought of any yet, and there's Dylan, sketching up a storm, already on his way to doubling the minimum requirement, surprise surprise.

I didn't want to be thought of as an underachiever, so I figured I'd better get started, but it was harder than I thought. I banged my head against the wall for days before creating a somewhat

decent list. But I stuck with it. And after several weeks of playtests and iterations, I had created an original board game that those well-versed in their times tables actually thought to be mildly entertaining.

So you see, Mario was right again. You should always make it a habit to bang your head against brick walls. Because sometimes, good things come out.

And a last bit of advice from Mario that I think is particularly pertinent is that seven out of eight times in life, the princess is in another castle.

You see, as creative and passionate individuals, our goals are constantly changing, and that's a good thing. Before we've even reached one castle, we're already planning for the next. So embrace it.

Think about yourself a year ago. A year ago today we couldn't make a game pitch to save our lives, and we can create solid pitches in our sleep.

A year ago today few of us had ever touched UDK, and now we can kismet our way through anything.

A year ago today we were strangers, and now we'll forever be colleagues and the best of friends.

A year ago today we were former teachers, construction workers, managers, students, researchers, and game tinkerers. And now, now we're game designers.

To all our family, friends, and teachers who have supported us along the way, we owe the world to you and will forever be grateful.

And to GD18, the best of luck to all of us as we step out into the real world. And as we move forward, always remember to keep living on the edge. Congratulations.