

Congratulations Fall 2021 Graduating Class! I am Purificación Martínez, and as Chair of the Faculty, it is my privilege to address you on this momentous day. How wonderful it is to see so many smiling eyes behind those masks. Last December, I recorded my remarks. I was sad and hopeful. That hope is now realized. What remarkable progress we have made by wearing masks, complying with test mandates and getting vaccinated. I am so proud of our responsible approach to the pandemic. Think about it: it made possible this wonderful event, it made possible face to face instruction. Delta, Omicron, we are ECU, we will continue doing what is right, we will outlast you! As a medievalist, I have one more thing to say: the coronavirus is not, will never become, the alpha and the omega.

To the point of my presence here today. If I were to ask the people who love you how they feel about you getting your degree, they probably would say: "I can't explain what this means." If I were to ask you how you feel, you probably would say: "I have no words."

Do not fear, as a literature professor, I never lack words. This is what I propose to you: as the last lecture that you will hear from a professor at ECU, let's talk about role models, music, language, endurance, determination and your future.

Today marks the beginning of your professional path. I learned a few days ago that one of my mentors is retiring after more than 30 years on the job. I am not talking about a dear professor, but about a musician, Joan Manuel Serrat. Of course, he does not know, because we have never met, how he taught me values and the words to articulate them. While listening to his music, I learned what it meant to be a decent human being. With [Mediterráneo](#), I realized that, as an individual, I am rooted in culture, history, geography. With [Romance de Curro el Palmo](#) I learned the pain of being on the margins of society, different. Like him, I have [Algo personal](#), something against reckless people in power who forget, in Serrat's words, "that there are children in the world (que en el mundo hay niños)."

I found my first teacher outside the classroom, but professors like Maite Echenique, Diego Catalán, Lou Deutch or Elias Rivers showed me how it is possible to live those values. Most importantly, they showed me how to teach others to embrace them as well. We, the faculty at ECU, might not have been the first ones to talk to you about approaching critically everything you read and see, or about the disastrous consequences of not dealing with climate change, or why we all

should work tirelessly toward an equitable society. However, I am certain that we cemented those ideas in you and gave you the tools to act. Don't ever forget that the people who helped you to acquire those tools were those who kept you healthy [CHEER FOR THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE IN STUDENT AFFAIRS], who advised you [CHEER FOR THE AMAZING PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS], who taught you [CHEER FOR THE FACULTY].

Remember, from now on, you are the living testimony of the power of the Pirate Nation. Never forget, our might is because we all live and breathe our motto "servire", to serve.

In 1981, after a dictatorial regime that ended in 1975 and before a historic election in 1982, my birth country was decisively moving toward a full-fledged democracy. My mentor, Joan Manuel Serrat, released his album En Tránsito (literally, in transit, accurately, In transition). One of the songs, Hoy puede ser un gran día (today can be a great day) appears in every stream platform you can imagine as one of his best songs of all time. I have never been able to embrace its overly optimistic message until two thoughts collided in my mind: he is retiring; I

need to talk to the graduates. Here are his words. Please think broadly about his “hoy/today”. Think about what comes after today, think about serving:

Pelea por lo que quieres y no desesperes si algo no anda bien.

Hoy puede ser un gran día, y mañana también

Fight for what you want and do not give up if something is off.

Today can be a great a day, and tomorrow as well.

Graduates, of course, today is a great day. It is up to all of us to make sure that tomorrow is also a great day. We the faculty made sure you knew how to make the world a better place. At ECU, deeply grounded in the needs of the real world, we will continue to research, innovate, teach. In your jobs or further studies, you will put into action everything you learned. We are ECU, we fight to serve.

Congratulations.