



Sundar Pichai

BE HOPEFUL

<https://youtu.be/tRm1bwWHPkE>

Hello, everyone. And congratulations to the Class of 2020, as well as your parents, your teachers, and everyone who helped you get to this day.

I never imagined I'd be giving a commencement speech with no live audience ... from my backyard. But it's giving me a much deeper understanding for what our YouTube Creators go through! And I certainly never thought I'd be sharing a virtual stage with a former President ... a First Lady, a Lady Gaga, and a Queen Bey ... not to mention BTS.

I don't think this is the graduation ceremony any of you imagined. At a time when you should be celebrating all the knowledge you've gained, you may be grieving what you've lost: the moves you planned, the jobs you earned, and the experiences you were looking forward to. In bleak moments like these, it can be difficult to find hope.

So let me skip right to the end and tell you what happens: you will prevail.

That's not really the end of the speech, so don't get too excited.

The reason I know you'll prevail is because so many others have done it before you. One hundred years ago, the class of 1920 graduated into the end of a deadly pandemic. Fifty years ago, the class of 1970 graduated in the midst of the Vietnam War. And nearly 20 years ago, the class of 2001 graduated just months before 9/11.

There are notable examples like this. They had to overcome new challenges, and in all cases they prevailed. The long arc of history tells us we have every reason to be hopeful.

So, be hopeful.

There's an interesting trend I've noticed: It's very conventional for every generation to underestimate the potential of the following one.

It's because they don't realize that the progress of one generation becomes the foundational premise for the next. And it takes a new set of people to come along and realize all the possibilities.

I grew up without much access to technology. We didn't get our first telephone til I was 10. I didn't have regular access to a computer until I came to America for graduate school. And our television, when we finally got one, only had one channel.

So imagine how awestruck I am today to be speaking to you on a platform that has millions of channels.

By contrast, you grew up with computers of all shapes and sizes. The ability to ask a computer anything, anywhere—the very thing I've spent my last decade working on—is not amazing to you. That's OK, it doesn't make me feel bad, it makes me hopeful!

There are probably things about technology that frustrate you and make you impatient.

Don't lose that impatience. It will create the next technology revolution and enable you to build things my generation could never dream of.

You may be just as frustrated by my generation's approach to climate change, or education. Be impatient. It will create the progress the world needs.

You will make the world better in your own ways. Even if you don't know exactly how. The important thing is to be open-minded so you can find what you love.

For me, it was technology. The more access my family had to technology, the better our lives got. So when I graduated, I knew I wanted to do something to bring technology to as many others as possible.

At the time, I thought I could achieve this by helping build better semiconductors. I mean, what could be more exciting than that?

My father spent the equivalent of a year's salary on my plane ticket to the U.S. so I could attend Stanford. It was my first time ever on a plane. But when I eventually landed in California, things weren't as I had imagined. America was expensive. A phone call back home was more than \$2 a minute, and a backpack cost the same as my dad's monthly salary in India.

And for all the talk about the warm California beaches ... that water was freezing cold!

On top of all that, I missed my family, my friends, and my girlfriend—now my wife—back in India.

Sundar as a Stanford graduate student

A bright spot for me during this time was computing. For the first time in my life, I could use a computer whenever I wanted to. It completely blew my mind.

And at that same moment, the internet was literally being built all around me. The year I arrived at Stanford was the same year the browser Mosaic was released, which would popularize the world wide web and the internet.

The summer I left was the same summer that a graduate student named Sergey Brin met a prospective engineering student named Larry Page.

These two moments would profoundly shape the rest of my life. But at the time, I didn't know it.

It took me a while to realize that the internet would be the single best way to make technology accessible to more people. As soon as I did, I changed course and decided to pursue my dreams at Google.

Inspired by the wonder that first browser created in me, I led the effort to launch one—called Chrome—in 2009, and drove the effort to help Google develop affordable laptops and phones so that a student growing up, in any neighborhood or village, in any part of the world, could have the same access to information as all of you.

Primary school students in the city of Dolores Hidalgo in Mexico

Had I stayed the course in graduate school, I'd probably have a Ph.D. today—which would have made my parents really proud. But I might have missed the opportunity to bring the benefits of technology to so many others.

And I certainly wouldn't be standing here speaking to you as Google's CEO. Believe me when I say I saw none of this coming when I first touched down in the state of California 27 years ago.

The only thing that got me from here to there—other than luck—was a deep passion for technology, and an open mind.

So take the time to find the thing that excites you more than anything else in the world. Not the thing your parents want you to do. Or the thing that all your friends are doing. Or that society expects of you.

I know you're getting a lot of advice today. So let me leave you with mine:

Be open ... be impatient ... be hopeful.

If you can do that, history will remember the Class of 2020 not for what you lost, but for what you changed.

You have the chance to change everything. I am optimistic you will.

Thank you.

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