

2008 Commencement Speech:
UCI School of Social Sciences

*John Wie**

Greetings administration, faculty, honored guests, family and friends. Hello and welcome to the School of School of Social Sciences Class of 2008. My name is John Wie and I am amazed that soon, we, the graduates, will officially take the next step in life. I would first like to thank the following guests: Executive Vice Chancellor Michael Gottfredson, Dean Sharon Salinger, UCI Alum Class of '69 Steve Capps, and Dean Barbara Doshier. I would additionally like to thank, of course, my parents, friends, and the faculty and staff. Without all of you, I would not have had such a fulfilling four years here on campus.

Looking back at my career at UCI and in the School of Social Sciences, I can recollect an amazing amount of experiences. Whether hiking through Great Britain with the Education Abroad Program; running through the rain at night by the Science Library to videotape that one scene for the 24-Hour Mad Film Dash; waltzing into Professor Danziger's final exam thinking I was early, only to find out that I was an hour late; or teaching high school students about globalization with Global Connect. These are memories that hopefully many of you have made and will cherish forever. And to both family and friends, I'm sure that you are equally as privileged to have raised or come to know these fine individuals.

* John Wie graduated from UCI in June of 2008 with a major in Political Science and a minor in Film Studies. While at UCI, John was a contributing staff writer for UCI's New University newspaper and a leader of the School of Social Sciences Dean's Ambassadors Council. He also served as a site supervisor for UCI's "Global Connect" social science educational initiative and co-associate editor of the GlobalScope curriculum guide for high school students.

John's article on trademark law and the Gibson Guitar case appears in the Fall 2007 edition of the Law Forum Journal. In the Fall of 2009, John will be headed to the London School of Economics for the first component of a joint Master's degree program in Global Media and Communications; he will return to the University of Southern California for the next component of his program the following year. John is also interested in attending both law and film school in the future.

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Throughout these past few weeks (and even up until the very last minute today), I have had a long time to ponder the question of what we should take from our experiences at UCI? One, we have gained knowledge about the way people understand, relate, and adapt in the world. And two, we should realize that we are part of a special generation called the “Millennials.” What exactly is a *Millennial*, you may ask? Back in the late 1990s, ABC News took a poll to name our generation. Some suggestions were Generation-Y, Generation.com, and my personal favorite, the Boomer-Babies.

However, the number one name voted upon was the “Millennium Generation,” also known as *Millennials*. The book, *Millennials Rising*, defines us as: being born in or after 1982; the first to grow up in the 'Internet' age; the first to self-teach ourselves and teach our parents and elders how to use the computer and other devices; and the world's first generation to grow up thinking of itself as 'global.'

It's a very unique resume we all share, yet, with all this knowledge and education, what responsibility does it come with? Here are my two cents: responsibility is not only for yourself, but also to share your expertise with others, as you will be called upon to make moral, global decisions.

Let's take a look at the amazing evolution of technology. Think back just forty years. I'm sure many of the older audience members, faculty and parents alike, can fondly recollect the revolutionary 8-track or the original vinyl record. I, personally, can attest to owning many cassette tapes with my favorite Disney tunes. Fast-forward to just the past four years. Facebook, the online social, networking phenomenon was created only in 2004. Youtube, a website where videos can easily be watched online, was conceived only in 2005. It's flabbergasting to see how fast this generation has become accustomed to using these tools as parts of our everyday lives, and how quickly we have evolved from the past.

Our lives and security have also been impacted by technology. Take for instance, the impact of hackers on identity theft. They were able to view and steal confidential materials, compromising U.S. State Department files just two years ago, and at UCI less than a month ago. Or take, for instance, the large breakdown that occurred when the communications cables broke between Southeast Asia and the Middle East. These examples show just how vulnerable we are to the power of technology.

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We are all living in a dynamic period of time, full of constant change and expectations, where the world is seeking solutions more than ever, and also creating entirely new moral dilemmas between what is just and unjust, virtuous and non-virtuous.

Who better equipped to tackle these dilemmas than you, the Social Science graduate? Through your time at UCI, each of you has gained knowledge about human interaction, whether political or social, individual or collective. Top that with the fact that you are already preordained with the title of *Millennial*; that our generation has already accomplished so much, yet has the potential to do so much more. The greatest aspect of such potential is that each of you can accomplish this in your own way, whether through creative vision on screen, in print, or through philanthropy and compassion to others.

This theme may sound familiar to some, since the inspiration for today's speech is mainly due to one of my political science classes. In this class, the professor took the time to tell us that he truly believed in our generation's potential to change and move people for the betterment of society. As social scientists and *Millennials*, we are called to act and respond to this challenge.

Look around you at your faculty, staff, family and friends when you walk and take that diploma. You are being congratulated for completing your undergraduate studies, but also you will be looked upon to utilize these 21st Century advancements, along with your knowledge and wisdom, and lead us to a better tomorrow. I'd like to conclude with a quote from Margaret Mead that I think sums this all up: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world." Thank you, and congratulations to the UCI Social Sciences Class of 2008!

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