

Emily Luft

October 22, 2023

### Shonda Rhimes Speech Story

Shonda Rhimes gave recent college graduates of her alma mater parting wisdom and life advice in a commencement speech that she said she did not feel qualified to share.

Dartmouth University's graduating class of 2014 received three parting lessons from Dartmouth alumna and notable television writer, Rhimes. Rhimes began her address by telling the graduates that she did not want to give this speech and felt unqualified to do so, but that it was a challenge she knew she needed to face.

Rhimes shared three pieces of advice that she wished she had heard before she graduated in what she kept referring to as her, "fireside chat," that might help graduates in taking their next steps right after graduation.

"Ditch the dream and become a doer," Rhimes said.

This specific lesson seemed to impact the audience in a way that the other lessons did not. Mollie Hemphill, a freshman at Baylor University from Texarkana, Texas, said that it was an impactful part of the speech.

"I personally sit around and think about what I want to do instead of actually doing it, so that was very inspiring," Hemphill said. "Even though she is an extremely successful person, it was not necessarily her dream or what she thought she was going to do. So it goes back to your dreams are kind of irrelevant."

Rhimes was careful to include that being someone that does more than just dream is not easy. She told the graduates that life in the real world will be difficult, but that community is so

important. Rhimes told the graduates to give back to their community, appreciate the world that they live in, and to make the world a better place using the tools they have acquired.

Rhimes was open to the students about the tradeoff they might face in their future when juggling family life and career life.

“Whenever you see me somewhere succeeding in one area of my life, that almost always means I'm failing in another area of my life,” Rhimes said.

A Baylor University student, Joaquin Torre, was impacted by Rhimes openness and relatability to the graduates.

“The thing that influenced me the most is seeing her openness in the speech, and her relating to the people in the crowds,” Torre said. “Embracing the fact that the fear of the future is not something you want to happen basically, and that it is refreshing to see someone in a position that you want to be in, go back and show that they were in the same position that you are in now.”

Rhimes did not leave the students alone in their fear of the future, but related to them in their fears and sadness to leave the place that had been their home for so long.

“You take it in,” Rhimes said. “You breathe this rare air. You feel alive. You be yourself.”

Rhimes graduated from Dartmouth and became a television writer, which she never thought she would pursue. She is now famous for creating several television shows, one being “Grey's Anatomy.”

Rhimes said she never thought she would be giving a commencement speech at her alma mater years after her own graduation. She left the graduates with a piece of advice she wished she had been given before becoming a, “citizen of the real world.”

“Who you are today, that's who you are,” Rhimes said. “So be brave. Be amazing. Be worthy. And every single time you get a chance, stand up in front of people. Let them see you. Speak. Be heard.”