

## UWC-USA 2018 Graduation Remarks

Good morning! Families and friends of our 2018 UWC-USA graduates; trustees, volunteers, and all who have contributed to make their education possible; alumni who today welcome them into their fold; faculty and staff who have engaged and supported them over these two years; first year students who have learned and lived with them in a spirit of intercultural understanding; and special guests Shelby and Gale Davis, whose investment in students from across the United World College makes this movement possible in so many ways, thank you for joining us here in Montezuma to share this special occasion.

Class of 2018, in a spirit of gratitude, please join me in a round of applause for all of the people who have invested in you during your time at UWC-USA. And to all who have invested in the Class of 2018, please join me in a round of applause acknowledging their accomplishment and continued promise.

I have chosen the language of “investment” very deliberately, in honor of our 2018 graduates, but also in honor of Shelby Davis, whom I would like to introduce now.

Shelby is a man who clearly knows how to invest. His investment management firm, Davis Financial Advisers, has managed over \$100 billion in assets over the last 10 years.

The most wonderful thing about getting to know Shelby over the last two years, however, is that this impressive dollar figure isn't the most impressive thing about him. When I asked Shelby during our first dinner together why he has invested so generously in UWC students over these past 20 years, he didn't tell me about his philosophy of investing or about his personal reasons. He replied with a question of his own. He asked, “What is there better?”

I want us all to reflect on Shelby's question. Both on what it shows about Shelby, and what it implies about our graduates. It shows clearly that what Shelby gives, financially and otherwise, isn't about him. It is about others. And it implies that UWC students are the best investment for someone who knows the power of investment, someone who knows how to devote his time, effort, and energy--his greatest resources--to achieve excellent returns.

The thing about investment, like any future-directed activity, is that you don't *really* know if it will “pay off.” You don't know if it will prove worthwhile. Especially when we invest in people, there are many unknowns. Where we come from, our resilience in the face of difficulties, our courage to stand up for what is right when we are under pressure, our reaction to our own failures, and our response to the mixture of good and back luck that comes our way--all of these things can, and do, complicate the difference between our good intentions and our success in living up to someone else's investment in us. Upon consideration, you might think that people are the worst sort of investment, as uncertain as it gets. So why invest in people, as all of us here at UWC-USA do?

This brings me back to Shelby and what is impressive about him. His investment in you, and in students and alumni from across the UWC movement, shows that he understands the power of each human being to shape the future. And the future holds the hopes of all of us. In joining the UWC movement, you expressed that you, too, believe in the power of individuals to make a difference. You expressed the commitment to do your part to make a more peaceful and sustainable future.

You have spent two years exploring your own power to make a difference. You also got a chance to see first hand people who made a positive difference by putting their time and effort into you--your teachers, the staff that fed you, cleaned up after you, created the conditions for you to be and do your best, host families who shared their resources to make a home for you, community partners in service, project week hosts across the Southwest, and of course donors who chose to spend their hard earned money to support you rather than to spend it on themselves or even on those they know and love.

One day you will wake up and realize you don't remember the subject matter you studied so hard in preparation for your IB exams. (Maybe that day has already come!) You may not fully realize what an amazing collective accomplishment you've made, with over 325 college acceptances among you and \$7.5M in financial aid awarded by institutions that believe in your promise to do more for the world than just take care of yourselves, though that is important too.

What I do hope you realize now, and will always remember, is the power of someone else's investment in you and your commitment to make a positive difference in the world. I hope that this memory helps you to see the importance of being worthy of that investment. This takes humility. It takes a healthy skepticism toward immediate gratification and easy satisfaction with trendy thinking. It takes gratitude not just in what you say, but in what you do. I ask you to join me in welcoming Shelby Davis, with deep gratitude for the investment he, Gale, and the Davis family have made in you, in the UWC-USA campus, and in the transformational UWC mission.