

Wearing the Red Robes

May 11, 2018 | [Drew Sykes](#)



Do you remember your college graduation? The thoughts running through your head, the sound of “Pomp and Circumstance” from the band, that feeling of butterflies in your stomach mixed with a twist of accomplishment?

Maybe it’s something you’re still looking forward to or something you’ve built years of experience on since your special day. Either way, it’s a milestone. One of those “I’m going to remember this moment” moments.

We wanted to document some of the feelings surrounding graduation from members of the class of 2018, so we invited a group into our studio and asked them to try on their cap and gown and look into a mirror.

Then we asked them the question, off the cuff, “How does it feel to wear the Red Robes?”

The video above showcases their unfiltered answers. We captured a variety of emotions and responses with a common thread — a sense of accomplishment. [Follow NC State on Instagram](#) to see their individual stories.

We also asked them to share their top moments at NC State, or a statement about the impact the university has left on them. Here’s what they had to say:

Kai McNeil, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

“A moment that really stands out for me was freshman year, basketball beat UNC-CH away. That whole week it had snowed, so I had a camera from the Technician, and I had to keep it for the whole week because I couldn’t get it back to the office. That night, all my friends rushed out to the Belltower. We took off from Tucker and we got to the Belltower in five minutes — it’s a 15 minute walk. All of the sudden, we’re out there, we’re chanting, and a mattress flies out in front of us and someone strikes a match. It creates this giant fire, and everyone surrounds it, and I pull out my camera and start taking pictures. There’s this massive crowd of at least a thousand students, and the Belltower is lit up red and there’s this raw, red fire in front of it, and everybody’s chanting and there’s wolves up. I took the picture and I didn’t know what I was doing. I just slid into the snow and started taking pictures. I got back to my room and I had taken this big picture of Wolfpack fans lit up by a red fire, which sums up Wolfpack spirit. At that moment, I knew that I picked up the camera for a reason.”



Meredith Biechele, College of Engineering

“NC State gave me everything. Not only did it give me a great education, but I learned so much inside and outside of the classroom about the world and myself. NC State gave me the opportunities to finally see myself as a leader, and I learned what it really means to build a community and to be a part of a community. NC State challenged me, challenged my beliefs and challenged me to grow. I know I want to give back to this great university and hopefully empower the next generation of people who come after me so they can have the same experience, if not better, than what I had. I’m proud and honored to have gone to this institution. We’re humble and we give back to society, and I think that’s a really powerful and cool thing.”

Mahmoud Khader, College of Engineering

“The nice thing about this campus and this city is that it pushes you to keep trying and to be inspired by other success stories around you. At the end of the day, it’s all about starting something new and trying to start something that can help people.

I started the Boxing Club my freshman year, because I wanted there to be a community of people coming together, learning how to defend themselves, getting a good workout for their mind and body.

My intention was to start something to build that community. Later, people would come to me and tell me that boxing helped them in areas of concern in their life — addiction, depression, anxiety.

Someone came to me and told me they had the choice between rehab and finding a sport that would help kick a drug addiction. They told me that boxing helped beat it. I had one individual explain to me that boxing helped them turn away from suicide.

For me, as someone whose main goal was to provide a community, I didn’t realize the service it brought was also people finding hope within each other, and all they’re doing is throwing punches at bags and doing a lot of cardio. I’m hoping the impact continues to exist on NC State’s campus and that people can still benefit from it.”

Laasya Vulimiri, Poole College of Management

“One of my legacies at NC State revolves around people. I came into Poole College of Management my freshman year, and I had a peer leader who was there for me as a mentor to help me through my first year of college both academically and socially.

I was so impacted by that individual that I decided to join the organization myself, and I’ve been involved for the past two years. Through this organization, I’ve been able pay it forward and to mentor others.

One of the quotes we live by here is ‘for the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack’.

I think through the peer leader organization, I’ve really been able to embody that phrase, and support members of the Wolfpack when they may be having a hard time, especially in your first year, because it can be overwhelming with so many people on campus.

That organization has really touched me, because I feel like I’ve been able to make people feel more supported and welcome at NC State.”

Justin Davis, College of Engineering

“Something that really stood out for me was my involvement in Engineers’ Council. I joined as a freshman and worked my way up through the ranks. I was president this last year, and one thing that’s great about Engineers’ Council is that we’re part of a national association, so I got to go to Purdue and Arizona State, and it allowed me to meet so many talented and outgoing engineers across the country. We learned from each other and networked. I appreciate opportunities like these that NC State Engineering provided throughout my time here.

I joined Mechanical Engineering because I like science and math, I like building things, I like solving problems. I hope that I can, and I don’t want to be corny and say “change the world,” or anything like that. Of course, we’d like to do that. But, if I can make one product or design one thing that can help one person, just one person, that’s all I want. It’s not like I need to go and build a crazy structure and everyone knows my name. I just hope that I can use my degree and my knowledge and do good things.”

Matthew Wright, College of Design

“I can think of three main things I’m proud to say I did here.

The first is getting involved with the African American Cultural Center as soon as I got onto campus. I remember going to symposium, and I met people like Mama Thorpe and some of the student leaders. Getting involved with the center gave me my first job as a graphic design intern, it exposed me to parts of campus I didn’t know existed, it taught me so much history about my own culture and how I can help improve the culture on campus for future students. I’m leaving as an ambassador of the center with AYA Ambassadors, so it was full circle.

The second is joining Fusion Dance Crew and Panoramic Dance Project. Joining those dance organizations exposed me, with Panoramic, to the semi-professional side of dance where we worked with choreographers from different places around the world and we got to experience what it’s like to rehearse on different schedules and make an impact to the campus community and beyond — like the ACCelerate Festival in DC recently.

With Fusion, I was able to foster a community of dancers that were passionate as students. Even though they may not want to pursue dance full time, that love of dance at the moment is what we really cherished. I was able to lead the team as a choreographer for the last two years and help dancers find themselves through that avenue of art, and that was something I could never put into words how impactful that was for me.

The last one is joining Lambda Phi Epsilon International Fraternity, Inc., which is an Asian interest organization. It was an opportunity for me to learn about a culture other than my own, and to understand how the plights of other communities are in ways, very similar, and very different from the plights of the community I identify with. Being able to meet a group of guys who are passionate about giving members something to look forward to as far as being a leader on campus, that was something I was very proud to be a part of and honored to have a hand in building on this campus and I’m excited for the future of our chapter.

My hope and dream is to inspire people that are coming up in the future to do whatever they want to do within reason, and to be unapologetically themselves. It’s that kind of quest for authenticity that is going to make your college career more than any organization, more than any class, more than any kind of degree. I think self-actualization goes beyond any degree. That’s my biggest hope and dream.

And, you know, to perform with Beyonce on stage.”

Meghan Glova, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

“I’ve been a sports reporter here for four years now, and I originally just came

into it for something to do, but I ended up finding something I truly love. It's gotten me every internship opportunity, every job opportunity.

Sports here are such a huge deal and so nostalgic for NC State as a whole, and I've been lucky to get that close-up perspective that not many get to experience.

My top moment for this year was storming the court for Duke. I was front and center, ready to go and take it on, because that's what everyone was expecting. I already had that mindset that I had to go out and do it before I graduated, because freshman year, we beat Duke and everyone stormed the court, but I didn't know it was a thing. I was at the tippy top and I saw people running out and was like, "Aww! That looks awesome! I wish I could do that," and so that was my goal. If we won, I was going to be the first person out on that court, for senior year, so I could say I did it, so I wouldn't have any regrets from missing it freshman year.

Another one — my little sister goes to NC State, and she's my camera person. It's been fun to show her what I do and help her along the way. We road tripped to Florida State to watch the football team take on FSU at the beginning of the year. It was the first big ACC win we had and it really set the tone for the rest of the season. We did well — definitely the best season in my time here. It's nice that, while I'm getting that professional experience, I also get that bond with my sister and get to share my experience at NC State with her."

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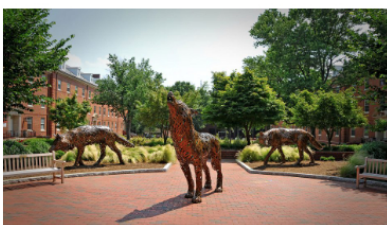
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