

President David Oxtoby
Pomona College Commencement 2015
May 17, 2015

Charge to the Class of 2015

Over the last year, two words have been much on my mind: “daring” and “safe.” All over campus, you see signs that say “Campaign Pomona: Daring Minds.” This is indeed the theme of our campaign, which is aimed at raising resources for our many strategic goals, and which will conclude seven months from now at the end of December. The phrase speaks to the value of taking risks, of encouraging students (and faculty) to move out of their comfort zones, to dare to think big rather than settle for something easy. It connects to creativity and innovation, core values for Pomona College and liberal arts education. It recalls the spirit of adventure present in the very air of California, whether in the challenge of climbing the highest mountain in the Lower 48, the innovation present in countless Silicon Valley startups, or the inspiration found in Los Angeles, the creative capital of the world. Pomona College lives to foster this daring spirit, as exemplified by the plans that many of you in the Class of 2015 have after graduation.

avoidance of difficult subjects and missing out on the growth that can result from confronting

campus. The recent earthquake in Nepal took place halfway around the world, but two students from Pomona and others from the Claremont Colleges were there at the time and thankfully have returned safe. Sexual violence is, sadly, not just something that takes place in dangerous locations that we have been warned to avoid, but it can intrude and damage lives on the most idyllic of campuses. Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, are not just places on the map but are the sites of events that have a direct bearing on the lives of members of this college community, and have inspired the powerful national message that Black Lives Matter.

At Pomona College, we strive to create a space in which members of the community can take chances and aim high, while being supported and kept safe. (Yes, we sometimes fall short of this goal, and at Pomona, we do not hesitate to say we can and must do better. And, so too, I ask of you, members of the class of 2015 that as you graduate and move out into the world, I hope that you will set high goals and help to build communities that will support others in reaching their own goals. Don't be comfortable, but stay safe! Don't be reckless, but be daring! Congratulations to the Class of 2015!