

The best commencement speeches, ever

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For his speech at Tulane University Commencement 2014, Wynton Marsalis brought his horn to the podium. (Photo by Sally Asher)

National Public Radio staffers have compiled a list of the best commencement addresses ever.

"We've hand-picked over 300 addresses going back to 1774," says the database's [webpage](#), which can be searched by name, school, date or theme.

Searching for Tulane University, we find that three commencement addresses made the list ? Anderson Cooper (2010), Ellen DeGeneres (2009) and His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2013).

"It was so important for me to lose everything because I found what the most important thing is. The most important thing is to be true to yourself," DeGeneres said in her address to the ["Katrina class"](#) ? who, as first-year students, were on campus only hours before they were forced to evacuate ahead of Hurricane Katrina. The database contains a video of her speech.

Such a massive project takes a village. The searchable list was compiled by Jeremy Bowers, Emily Davis, Danny DeBelius, Christopher Groskopf, Anya Kamenetz, Meredith Rizzo and Sami Yenigun, with thanks to Cristina Negrut, the creator of

graduationwisdom.com, where many of these speeches were first collected.

NPR has lots more commentary about commencement addresses on public radio's [higher education blog](#), including this post: [“What We Learned From The Best Commencement Speeches Ever.”](#)