

Houghton College says goodbye to Class of 2009

By **BRIAN QUINN**
THE SPECTATOR

HOUGHTON — What world is this that you're entering?

The question was one Sabine O'Hara, keynote speaker at Houghton College's graduation ceremony Saturday morning, put to the Class of 2009 when she stepped up to speak.

"I do want to suggest to you that this world has three

key characteristics. These characteristics may help you find your place in the world," O'Hara, executive director of the Council for International Exchange of Studies, said.

The world the graduates are entering is an international, interconnected and interactive world, O'Hara said.

"I can't think of any profession we might release you into ... that does not have

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Members of the Class of 2009 move the tassels from one side of their caps to the other, signifying that they are now graduates, as President Dr. Shirley Mullen watches.

Houghton College says

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global connections," she said.

O'Hara told the class that less than 10 percent of graduates will have the international experience needed to be future leaders. When a student learns a foreign language, he or she learns more than just how to communicate with those who speak that language.

"What you learn is how people frame the world differently and how people perceive the world differently," she said.

O'Hara's keynote address turned to technology and online communication.

"Can I just ask you — how many of you are on Facebook?" she asked. "Anybody text or receive a text message while I was speaking? This is a very wired, very interactive world. How many of you

have Facebook contacts outside the U.S.?"

"It is about real people and real connections and the real world all around us," O'Hara said. "This is definitely your world. It is still the world of our creator. Congratulations."

O'Hara took a moment to recognize the role the graduates' parents played in their journeys.

"You saw their first steps, their first words. You saw them through primary school, you saw them through high school and you delivered them to Houghton," she told parents. She reflected on what the faculty found when the Class of 2009 arrived. "Some of them, when they came here, knew exactly what they wanted and some were searching and confused. Some knew everything, some knew nothing."