# AI Robot Sophia and NFL Kicker Butker Deliver Polarizing Commencement Speeches



D'Youville University, a private institution in Buffalo, New York, hosted an unusual commencement address on its spring commencement Saturday. An AI robot named Sophia, created by Hanson Robotics, addressed over 2,000 attendees, which included students, faculty, and families. D'Youville’s president, Lorrie Clemo, explained that the university aimed to highlight the significance of AI technology in society.

Sophia wore a D'Youville University hoodie and engaged in a Q&A session with student body president John Rizk, instead of delivering a conventional speech. The robot provided generic advice common in graduation speeches, emphasizing lifelong learning, adaptability, and embracing failure as part of growth.

Sophia’s selection as the speaker faced backlash before the event, with over 2,500 people signing a petition to replace the robot with a human due to concerns about the impersonal nature of an AI speaker. Despite this, the university did not hold an alternate ceremony, after clarifying that Sophia's segment would be brief.

In another development, Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker, known for his precision in field goals and Super Bowl wins, delivered a controversial commencement speech at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas. During his 20-minute address, Butker expressed traditional Christian views, advised male graduates to embrace their masculinity, and lauded female graduates for their future roles as wives and mothers. He also voiced strong opinions against abortion, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and other issues, linking them to cultural disorder.

Butker’s remarks on women’s roles, President Biden’s support for abortion, and Pride Month drew mixed reactions from the audience and online commentators. Although the college initially labeled the speech "inspiring," subsequent responses led to comments being disabled on related social media posts and the speech video.

Both instances highlight the evolving and often contentious landscape of commencement speeches in academic settings.