# D'Youville University in Buffalo, N.Y. Features A.I. Robot Sophia as Commencement Speaker



D'Youville University in Buffalo, N.Y., featured an A.I. robot named Sophia as the commencement speaker for its spring graduation ceremony on May 13, 2024. The event drew over 2,000 attendees, including students, faculty, and their families. The decision aimed to highlight the role of technology in enriching human experiences, according to University President Dr. Lorrie Clemo.

Sophia, developed by Hanson Robotics, shared generic advice compiled from previous commencement speeches. The robot, dressed in a D’Youville University hoodie, conveyed themes such as lifelong learning, adaptability, and pursuing passions. The commencement address deviated from the norm, involving an interview format with student body president John Rizk, rather than a traditional speech.

The choice of an A.I. robot to address graduates received mixed reactions. An online petition to replace Sophia garnered over 2,500 signatures, citing a sense of disrespect among students, especially those who experienced virtual high school graduations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite offering to hold an alternate ceremony, the university proceeded with the original plan, noting that Sophia's segment was only a small part of the overall event.

Sophia, who previously spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in 2017, concluded the address by offering local tips on Buffalo wings and evading sports predictions. The ceremony concluded with a focus on student achievements.