

Commencement Speech

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Mr. President, Members of the Board of Trustees, My Colleagues the faculty, families, friends, and most of all, December class of 2008:

1. Congratulations to each and every one of you, the graduating members of the class of December 2008. And I would also like to congratulate the parents, spouses, and families of the students. I can speak from my personal experience that it is a great feeling to see your son or daughter graduate from college. Today marks a high point in your life. This is a culmination of your many years of dedication and hard work that brought you to a higher platform in your quest for a better and brighter future.
2. Your family members have invested their time, efforts, energy and resources to empower you through college education. We are all here today to mark, to confirm and to rejoice your past and present achievements. The degree you earned is an embodiment of your dedication and hard work. We are also here today to promote your readiness and preparedness to proceed into the world outside of Ferris State University.
3. I feel privileged to be asked to give a commencement speech at Ferris State University where I have been working for the last 22 years. This University has a unique philosophy in that we provide opportunity to those students who may have none otherwise. We also provide quality education similar to those of private institutions with small class sizes and without the use of teaching assistants at a cost which is only a fraction of what it is in the private universities. Our uniqueness also lies in the fact that we admit students who may not have been admitted at other institutions and yet when they graduate our placement rate is much higher than those of other institutions which claim to be superior to us.

4. As a faculty member, I would say on behalf of all my colleagues that we care about the success of our students and our graduates. Our commitment to you is lifetime. At any point in your life, if you need any assistance such as reference letters or phone calls to your potential employers, on your behalf, we are always willing to help you.

5. Graduates, I want to give you a little advice which my grandfather told me when I was a little boy. He said that there are three kinds of people in the world: those who do not learn from their own mistakes and keep on making the same mistakes again and again; those who learn from their own mistakes and these hopefully constitute the majority of the people and in the third category are smart people who learn from somebody else's mistakes. I hope you all fall in the last category. Keep in mind Albert Einstein's wise reminder that, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." You have to be bold and willing to take risks to succeed in life.

6. Education provides people with the tools and knowledge they need to understand and participate in today's world. It helps to uphold the human values that add to individual and collective well-being. Education forms the basis for continual intellectual improvement. It inspires self-reliance and provides the skills needed to participate in public deliberations. Education makes people self-confident and aware of opportunities, rights and responsibilities. It enables people to be responsible and informed citizens, and to have influence in politics and society. Education empowers people with the information and awareness needed to promote acceptance, tolerance and understanding among people. As you all know we have a global economy that requires us to compete to succeed. In this changed world, a job can go anywhere in the globe where there is an internet available and a worker who is willing to do the job and is smart and skilled.

7. In old times, a person's wealth was limited to land ownership. In fact, only the property owners had voting rights in the USA before the constitution was amended. The unique concept of education as a form of wealth was conveyed to me by my grandfather and I was so deeply inspired by it that I would like to share it with you today: **Of all the kinds of wealth a person may possess, education is the best, because - it cannot be taxed or taken away by the government; it cannot be stolen by a thief; one does not have to share it with the siblings; it is not burdensome; and, above all, the more we spend it the more it increases. I personally took my grandfathers advice a little too far and actually earned five degrees from four different countries.**

8. The U.S. Census Bureau data provides the substantial value of a college education in the United States. Workers 18 and over with bachelors degree earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,915. Workers with an advanced degree make an average of \$74,602, and those without a high school diploma average only \$18,734.

9. It is highly disturbing to note that we hear about companies closing their doors and workers losing their jobs. We hear about our neighbors losing their homes. However, because of the education you have received at Ferris State University and our history of placement rates points to the fact that despite of the bad times you will do just fine. You are graduating with an education that will enable you to keep up with the changes that face us in the future because you have learned how to learn.

10. Do not forget about the people struggling alongside you and below you, the people who haven't had the same opportunity and the same blessings as you do. The sad part is eight children a day are shot dead in the streets of America, 25 percent of eighth graders never graduate from high school and 35 million adults in the USA do not have a high school education.

11. The truth is that you are among the fortunate of the world. If you compare yourself with people from the rest of the world where people live in extreme poverty, you will learn to appreciate what you have. In some parts of the world, people live for less than a dollar per day with no access to clean water, health care or education.

12. You have acquired invaluable education at an exciting time when an entirely new kind of economy is taking shape. An education like yours from Ferris State University sets you apart not just from majority of your fellow Americans, but also from most of the people in the world. You, the young men and women of the information age with laptop computers, internet, cell phone, instant messaging, facebook, myspace, and e-mail , live at a time when education more than ever before is an economic advantage, when brains rather than muscles are responsible for driving the economy. America today is not just a military superpower, an economic superpower, and a political superpower, but perhaps at this juncture, most important of all, it is an educational superpower. American Universities are some of the best in the world.

13. America is still the beacon of hope for people from around the world. It has been a destination of choice for work for smart, ambitious and hard working people from everywhere. Perhaps, America is the only country in the world where ordinary people can transform themselves into extraordinary people. President elect Barack Obama is a classic example of that. He was raised by a single mother but he still managed to graduate from Columbia University and Harvard Law School and was elected to the US Senate and you all know the rest of the story. What he achieved would not have been possible anywhere else in the world.

14. Before I end, here is a quote from Dee Ann Palmer
*“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can, in all the places you can,
at all the times you can, for all the people you can,
as long as you ever can!”*

December 20, 2008

15. Have a Wonderful life and successful career. Take care of one another. Be careful tonight. And for the rest of your life, work hard, laugh often, and above all keep your honor and integrity.

Congratulations, Class of 2008.