

Commencement
Presidential Address
May 6, 2006
4:00 p.m.
David L. Eisler, President

College of Business

Graduation Recognition

It is a true honor to stand before you – the class of 2006. Today is a wonderful opportunity for you to reflect on your accomplishments here at Ferris State University. At such you need to know that your success is built upon the collective efforts of so many people who care about you and who take great pride in your growth and development.

I want to pause for a moment so we can express our thanks to them. I begin with our faculty, who have served as your teachers, advisors, guides, and mentors. We are truly fortunate to have a faculty who are dedicated to teaching and who care deeply about students. I would ask that are our faculty rise so we can express our thanks to them.

Next I want to recognize our staff, who each contribute in their way for you our students. In doing so I would note the beautiful decorations here today and their many contributions to today's ceremony.

We are fortunate today to have a beautiful commencement program which provides information on our University, its program, and today's ceremony. I extend special thanks to the students in our University Printing program for this wonderful keepsake.

Now to the special guests with us today. First I want to recognize your parents who are here with you. They have planned and sacrificed to help you reach this pinnacle of achievement. Parents please stand.

I would be willing to guess that there are also proud grandparents here today. Would you please stand.

For some graduates there are spouses or significant others who have stood by them in both good and tough times and have supported you working toward this day. Would you please stand.

Graduates, some of you also have children, who have had to share their Mom or Dad with books, studying, and homework assignments. I'd ask the children of our graduates to stand.

Finally we have many friends and other relatives of our graduates here today. Please stand so we can thank you for being here with us today.

Graduates in a few moments you'll be crossing this stage. A few helpful reminders - As you celebrate this achievement take time to thank those who have worked, helped, and supported you. Their sacrifice and love have helped create this moment for you.

Second, a practical, but useful reminder. We're going to take your picture as you receive your degree, don't forget to pause as I shake your hand and smile.

Student Stories

For every student who crosses our stage today there is a story, a story that includes parents, family and friends that supported them, teachers on all levels that have educated, challenged, and prepared them and personal commitment, effort, and sacrifice that has helped transform them. In the success, triumphs, and achievements of these graduates we see our hopes and dreams for the future, a future that is bright and promising and filled with opportunities that may yet be undiscovered.

Over the past few weeks I have taken time to visit with our graduates, learning about their experiences and hearing their stories. As I have listened, I have developed an even deeper appreciation of the students we have at Ferris State University and the power of the educational experience we provide here. These are more than outstanding students crossing our stage today. These are extraordinary people, individuals that I would be proud to have as son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother. I want you to know how impressed I am with these graduates. Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this is to share two of their stories.

With an English degree from the University of Michigan this student progressed rapidly in a large Midwestern department store chain, working in corporate security. However, in his job he found himself always looking at the dishonest and negative parts of society. In his future he wanted to be focusing on the good and positive. When his brother experienced serious health problems he and his wife moved back to Grand Rapids so their family could be together. Looking to continue his education, he found that the networking and security portions of our Master of Science in Information Systems Management degree fit well with his experiences and he enrolled in that degree Winter 2005. Without an undergraduate degree in computer science, he had to hit the ground running and

there were lots of areas where he had to work very hard. Three semesters later he graduates with that degree today. In addition to his studies in Big Rapids, through counselor Bill Foster at Ferris State University–Grand Rapids he learned of the bachelor degree program in Digital Animation and Game Design. He also enrolled in this program, working simultaneously toward both an undergraduate and master degree.

In describing his educational experience at Ferris he talks about how willing people have been to help him succeed. This has also been a busy time for his family, as his wife Mindy is working on an MBA and 12 weeks ago they welcomed their first child, Isaiah. Elias Olivarez is a wonderful example of the determination of a student to follow his dream and to create a bright future for himself. I would ask Elias Olivarez to stand and encourage his family and parents to stand also.

This young lady is the first person in her family to attend college. She began her studies at Central Michigan University in 2000, but did not like it and returned home to Battle Creek, where she earned two associate degrees from Kellogg Community College, graduating in 2003. At that point her younger sister was attending Ferris State University and she joined her here. By then through an accounting course she had developed an interest in human resource management. She quickly fell in love with the University and appreciates the encouragement and inspiration of faculty members like Bev DeMarr.

She has been quite active in student organization, president of the Society of Human Resource Management, a brother of Delta Sigma Pi, the professional business fraternity and a student delegate of the College of Business, assisting in the recruitment of students at events like Dawg Days. Last summer she applied for an internship in Human Resource Development at the Mayo Clinic. Beginning with 150 applicants, 4 people were interviewed, and she was chosen for the position. After her final internship evaluation, both of her supervisors followed her to her office and offered her a full-time permanent position at the Mayo Clinic. This year she has remained on the payroll of the Mayo Clinic while finishing her degree and she begins this position full-time on May 22nd. Once there she plans to continue studies toward a master's degree at the University of Minnesota. I would ask Latasha Perkins to stand and I would also encourage her family to stand.

On behalf of our University I wish you great success, meaning and fulfillment. As each of you sets out on the next step of your life and career you will face times of challenge, heartbreak, and disappointment. In those times when you might consider giving up, I'd encourage you to remember these wonderful examples of Elias Olivarez and Latasha Perkins. Like each of you, their stories represent not only hard work, sacrifice, and determination, but also the commitment to excellence required to not just succeed, but to excel.

