

May 5, 2007 Commencement
Michigan College of Optometry
College of Education & Human Services
President David L. Eisler
Ferris State University

Determined to Succeed

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 are yet to be discovered.

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 these stories with you.

Today we award our first childhood development and childhood management degrees. Katie Thomas is from Big Rapids and didn't want to move away. While she had a number of majors, and took her first classes in 1999 as a dual enrolled high school student, in the end she waited for the approval of this degree so she could follow her dream of working with children. Jessica Eberhart is from Covert, Michigan. and began her studies in 2000. She currently serves as a teacher and director at the Big Rapids Caps Program. She will continue this work in Big Rapids and will pursue her master's degree. It is a pleasure to recognize two of the first graduates from these programs, Katie Thomas and Jessica Eberhart. I would ask that they stand and be recognized. I would also ask that their parents stand.

This young man grew up in neighborhoods where crime and desperation were present. Despite the negative surroundings of his community, his mother worked tirelessly to provide what was needed for their family. Although he did not know any police officers, from his childhood he was fascinated by them.

Moving from Flint to Big Rapids was not an easy transition for this young man, the oldest of three children. He called home every evening saying he could not tolerate school

any longer. His mother told him to stick it out and he did. Even as late as his junior year he made plans to leave the university and the state with his associate's degree. However in this year's Police Academy he has found the atmosphere he sought.

Since 2004 he worked in our University Department of Public Safety, first as a student employee and then as a dispatcher. Immediately after today's commencement ceremonies we will swear him in as an officer for the Ferris Department of Public Safety. Today Derrick Turner achieves his goal of becoming a police officer and does so in this community which he now considers his adopted home.

His words say it best - "Through many years of hard work, motivation, dedication, and most of all support from family and friends, and no matter how many times I considered changing directions, I so appreciate being known now as a person of leadership in my community and as an inspiration to my family."

It is a pleasure to recognize Derrick Turner and I would ask that he stand. I would also ask that his family stand.

On behalf of our University I wish you great success, meaning and fulfillment. As each of you sets out on the next step on your life and career you will face times of challenge, heartbreak, and disappointment. I'd encourage you to remember the examples of Katie Thomas, Jessica Eberhart, and Derrick Turner. Their patience, hard work and determination have lead to the success that each enjoys today.

Congratulations and best wishes.