

College of Business  
Commencement - May 10, 2008  
Success Amidst Adversity

David L. Eisler, President

For every student who crosses our stage today there is a story, a story that includes parents, family and friends who supported them, teachers on all levels who educated, challenged, and prepared them, as well as their own personal commitment, effort, and sacrifice that has transformed them. In the achievements of these graduates we see the hopes and dreams for a better future, filled with opportunities yet to be discovered.

Over the past few weeks I have visited with our graduates, learning about their experiences and hearing their stories. As I listened, I developed an even deeper appreciation of the students we have at Ferris State University and the power of the educational experience they receive here.

These students crossing our stage today are more than outstanding. These are extraordinary people, who all have compelling stories behind the degrees they are receiving today. Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this is to share two of them with you.

This first student failed her first two years of high school. This wasn't because of academic ability or initiative; she moved so frequently during these years that she did not meet the required number of days of attendance. In her final two years of high school she completed all four years of work.

In Ferris State University's College of Business she connected with the legal studies program. She has excelled here leading the Legal Studies Association and becoming a member of Phil Alpha Delta, the pre-law fraternity. A self-supporting student, she has worked through college as a supervisor at our Rock Café. Today she is the first in her family to graduate from college, fulfilling long-held hopes and dreams. Her mother, Mary Jo, has been her inspiration through college, and she is very grateful for the support of faculty members Gayle Lopez and John Kane, who she describes as great professors. Next year she'll begin the next step in her educational journey as she attends the Wayne State University Law School.

I am honored to present to you Tammy Jones and would ask that she stand. I would also ask Tammy's family to stand and be recognized.

This next young woman came to Ferris as a member of the honors program, majoring in pre-pharmacy. Her interests changed and she became a public relations major. One day in the residence hall she heard a friend talking about the hospitality management gala. After talking about the program with faculty member Julie Doyle, she knew that she had found the right course of study for her. Throughout her life she had been an event manager, organizing her birthday party when she was eight, organizing Christian education efforts and mission trips. She describes the hospitality management program as "like a family."

At Ferris she has been an example of service to others. As a result of her own health challenges that required a number of trips to hospitals, she spent a summer working in a neonatal ward. She created the Make A Wish college chapter here, the fourth college chapter in Michigan, a model this organization hopes to extend nationally. As a leader with Make A Wish she visits with the families of very ill children to help discover the wish she helps make come true. She credits her experience in the honors program with encouraging her service engagement. This year Michigan Campus Compact selected her to receive their Commitment to Service Award.

She has served multiple roles at the annual hospitality management Gala, first as silent auction coordinator and eventually as Chief Operating Officer. She brought the professional convention management organization to campus. She thanks faculty member, Amy Dorey, who has mentored her in the program. Today she graduates with bachelor's degree in Business Resort Management after what she describes as "four great years." She is headed to Chicago to work in the meeting\planning industry.

I am honored to present to you Erica Rogerson and would ask that she stand. I would also ask Erica's family to stand and be recognized.

On behalf of our University I wish each of you great success and fulfillment. As you set out on the next step on your life and career you will face times of challenge and uncertainty. In those times, when you might consider giving up, I'd encourage you to consider the examples of Tammy Jones and Erica Rogerson and how each of us can succeed and make a difference in the lives of those around us.

Congratulations and best wishes