

May 4, 2007 Commencement
College of Allied Health Sciences
President David L. Eisler
Ferris State University

Determined to Make A Difference

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 this story with you.

In 1999 this young lady's aunt contacted her mother in Ghana and encouraged them to move to America. She started at Ferris in 2000 and has been entirely self supporting during her years here, working three or four jobs to help afford the cost of her education. These have included work as a student custodian, and as an assistant at a home for the physically and mentally disabled. During this period her life has been a challenging mix of balancing classes, study, work, and occasionally, sleep. Despite these challenges, she is one of the most positive, energetic and committed people I have ever met. She credits faculty, especially Sheila MacEachron, for their encouragement and support. This year she was recognized by the Society of Nuclear Medicine with their Mickey Williams Minority Scholarship, the first student at Ferris State University to be honored with this award. Strongly committed to healthcare, she graduates today with her associate's degree in nuclear medicine technology and her bachelor's degree in health care systems administration and next plans to work and attend graduate school. After graduate school she plans to return to Ghana and start her own hospital.

I am honored to present to you a remarkable young woman, Theresa Semana and would ask that she stand. I would ask that her family also stand and be recognized.

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. In those times when you might consider giving up, I'd encourage you to remember the example of Theresa Semana and her determination to succeed and to make a difference for others.

Congratulations and best wishes.