

College of Education and Human Services  
Commencement - May 10, 2008  
Determined to Succeed

David L. Eisler, President

As graduates you represent the hopes and dreams of our institution. Each of us at Ferris State University, faculty, staff, administration, and yes, your fellow students, look at you and see the culmination of our collective efforts. Your parents, friends, colleagues, and teachers see in you someone they have tried to nurture and wonder if they have done enough, if there is some last piece of information or advice that they might give that would make a difference.

My experience is that at commencement we look into the eyes of our graduates and discover that they've changed. They are no longer students, but friends and colleagues. So I hope you will forgive me if in the spirit of the academy and as an expression of our university's hopes for you if I try to deliver one final lesson.

Each of you has overcome significant challenges as you worked toward this day of achievement. I'd like you to consider those challenges while I share with you the experience one of your fellow graduates.

This young man came to Ferris in 2002 as a criminal justice major and a defensive end on the football team. His life turned upside down on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 when he was in an automobile accident. His lungs collapsed and he nearly died. The crash fractured his c-7 vertebrae paralyzing him from the neck down. After the accident he missed only one semester of school. As he worked toward completing his studies, he began the even harder work of recovering physically, which began with twitches of feeling in his fingers. Soon he was able to lift one-pound weights, and then exceeded the weights in the rehabilitation facility. Through hard work and therapy he now has full use of his arms and upper body and continues to improve. This semester he interned in Reed City as a juvenile probation officer and next year plans to return to Ferris for his master's degree with the goal of earning his doctorate and becoming a member of the faculty at Ferris.

This courageous graduate credits his success to hard work and the support of fiancée Kristin Morales. I am honored to present to you, Jim Bourdlais. I would ask that his parents, family, and Kristin stand and be recognized.

On behalf of our University I wish you great success and fulfillment. As each of you sets out on the next step on your life and career you will face times of heartbreak, and disappointment. I encourage you to persevere through those challenges, as did Jim Bourdlais and with determination succeed against all odds.

Congratulations and best wishes