

Engaged for Success  
College of Business  
May 9, 2009 - 4:00 pm

David L. Eisler, President

There is something truly magical about what we witness today. For those of us fortunate to have the opportunity to work with students here at our University, we know it and feel it. In the daily experience of college we don't often have the opportunity to step back and to see what our students have become. Today provides that opportunity when we can pause, reflect and celebrate the truly life changing difference education can make.

Education is the story of personal achievement, and how talent, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice can create remarkable opportunities. Each of our graduates today has a story. I wish that I could tell you each one, as each is meaningful. I would like to share one such special story with you.

This graduate grew up in a working family. His father was a mechanic and this young man is also good with his hands. Beginning at age 14, he repaired cars, soldered circuits, poured concrete, or worked in a machine shop. He is the first person from his family to go to college. He came to Ferris because his football coach recommended it, and he could complete the admissions application without a fee.

His first year at school was not one of distinction. Sitting at the Rock dining center one day he knew that he had learned little. He decided to become engaged and set himself the goal of attending to law school. Part of his plans to achieve this goal was to join the debate team. He described to me his first experience in debate where he spoke for two minutes of the eight allotted him and spent the rest of the time drawing pictures to express himself. Today he is an award winning debater and has travelled around the country with his teammates.

Another part of this plan was to join student government where he served as its webmaster. Working with the president Libby Schmidt he became active in the then statewide organization of student governments, the Association of Michigan Universities. That year student government developed the textbook union concept. Fall of 2007 he became president of the SGA and during his year as president implemented the student legal counseling service. This is a young man who is a planner. He scheduled his classes that year on-line so that he could manage the demands of this presidency. A humble person, he speaks with pride of the plaque they earned for presenting at a student government conference at Texas A&M University

Perhaps most impressively this year was how as past president he has remained very active with student government. He can lead both from the top and from the center. He did much of the organizational efforts for this fall's inaugural Barbeque and Blues, which raised money for a student scholarship here at Ferris. Although I know this graduate well, I would never have imagined the schedule he has kept - student government, working 26 hours a week as a team

coordinator at the Technical Assistance Center, debate team, and president of Pi Kappa Delta forensics fraternity.

He has already earned an associate degree in legal studies and graduates today with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He has achieved his dream of attending law school and will enroll at Michigan State University this fall on a full scholarship.

This is truly a remarkable young man, bright, determined, thoughtful, and extraordinarily successful. It is a pleasure to present Joe Viviano. I would ask that he stand. I would ask for his parents and family to stand.

On a day when we celebrate the success of our academic programs, I also want to stress how important extracurricular activities can be in shaping and molding the lives of our students. In doing so I express my sincere thanks to hundreds of our faculty and staff who share their time with our students to create these opportunities.

Graduates, as you approach the stage today I would encourage you to reflect back on the opportunities you have received, and the many, many people who have reached out to help you. 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 Joe Viviano's wonderful example and to consider how active engagement in your community can not only help others, but change your own life.

Congratulations and best wishes class of 2009.