

College of Arts and Sciences
Commencement - May 9, 2008
Helping Others

David L. Eisler, President

There is something truly magical about what we will 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. However, today provides the opportunity to pause, reflect and celebrate the truly life-changing difference education can provide. We know firsthand the difference that education makes, and commencement shows how it has transformed our students.

Education is about knowledge about people and about life. Education is a calling, something that must be experienced to be appreciated. It is also 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. Although I wish that I could tell you each one, I would like to share just one with you as an example of the kinds of achievements we celebrate today.

This young woman discovered that her passion was helping others. At Ferris she spoke with Cathy Palazzo-Miller and discovered that social work was the right field of study for her. By the time she took her second course, she knew this was her calling.

Few students have ever equaled her commitment to community service. This year she was honored by Michigan Campus Compact with their Community Impact Award. She has also received their Heart and Soul and Commitment to Serve Awards. She has been the President of the Ferris Idols which coordinates Big Brother and Big Sister activity in our area. With our campus Make a Wish Foundation, she has helped make wishes a reality for four children. She coordinated our campus Take Back the Night March against domestic and sexual abuse. She was our student United Way coordinator and chaired the Homecoming Committee. This student truly believes that involvement is the key to success and demonstrates this daily through her actions.

She has been selected for the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps and will spend next year travelling the country helping others, including 5 months in the continued rebuilding effort in New Orleans. After that she is headed on to graduate school in social work.

I am honored to present to you Nicole Wheelock. I would ask that she stand and be recognized. I would also ask her parents and family to 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 I challenge to stop and consider - as Nichole has - the words of Martin Luther King who said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Congratulations and best wishes