

Determined to Excel  
Michigan College of Optometry and  
College of Education and Human Services  
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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 about knowledge and 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. I wish that I could tell you each one, as each is meaningful. I would like to share two special stories with you.

This first young lady was raised on the west side of Detroit. Not knowing if she would attend college, she found her connection through computer networking classes at Breithaupt Vocational Technical Center. There she was encouraged by teacher Perry Moore, a Ferris alumnus, to attend Ferris State University. Tyrone Collins called upon her school and helped encourage this interest. An honor student with good grades, she was able to receive the Detroit Public School scholarship, first attending in the fall of 2003.

After some time computer networking became too much about machines and too little about people for her. She was fortunate to seek out Mary Klein, an education counselor in the College of Education and Human Services. Using her advice she decided to become a mathematics education major, earning a physics minor, and discovered that her background in computer networking brought out the teacher in her.

It is clear to me that this graduate focuses on people and with her engaging personality she easily connects with them. She readily gives credit to others, thanking Associate Dean Paul Blake and Scholarship Program Coordinator Heather Youngs for their advice and counsel, and her mother for special support.

Determined to be an outstanding teacher, she talks about wanting to make things interesting and fun for her students, about the desire that every student in her classroom succeed. As a teacher she wants to be the best.

She is hopeful of returning to the Detroit Public Schools or perhaps to schools devastated by hurricane Katrina to teach. Places where true need exists. In this she wants to be the next Perry Moore for a prospective student, encouraging others to broaden their educational dreams and horizons, just as he did for her.

It is a pleasure to present to you an extraordinary young woman, Jimere Reed, and I would ask that she stand. I would ask that her parents and family also stand.

This next young woman came to Ferris State University from Iowa as a freshman to become an optometrist. She entered as an honor student, heard a presentation on the Student Government Association and joined. Rapidly advancing in this organization, she served as its president as a sophomore. She received many honors as an undergraduate - Torchbearer Leadership, Greek Woman of the Year, Phi Sigma Sigma Collegian of the Year. She also was active as a volunteer coaching a children's soccer team in Big Rapids and volunteered for after school reading programs in our public schools.

After her junior year she was admitted to the Michigan College of Optometry, a major step forward toward her dreams. Here she received the Heart of America Contact Lens Scholarship. Through Rotary and VOSH (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity) she was able to travel to San Carlos, Mexico where 11 students and 1 doctor treated 1900 people.

Her internship experiences have taken her to the Battle Creek Veteran Administration Hospital, the Pawnee Indian Health Service in Oklahoma, and most recently a private practice in Kansas City, Missouri. Next she will enter a residency year at BVA Advanced Eyecare in Oklahoma, learning to use lasers. Oklahoma is a state that licenses optometrists to do anterior segment laser procedures.

Today she graduates with her doctor of optometry degree fulfilling the dream that brought her here. It is a pleasure to present Amanda Umlandt and I would ask that she stand. I would ask that her parents and family also stand.

Graduates, as you approach the stage today I would encourage you to reflect back on the education 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 these wonderful examples of Jimere Reed and Amanda Umlandt and their determination to excel.

Congratulations and best wishes class of 2009.