



Ferris State University Commencement Address  
Saturday, May 9, 2009

Dr. Stephanie Leonardos, President & CEO  
AMERIKAM

Thank you, President Eisler, Members of the Board of Trustees, Graduates, your family and friends. This is an extraordinary honor from an extraordinary University.

And, thank you, on behalf of my entire family, who is here today to show their love and support...you are my life!

Graduates, look around you. This is a time of reflection and gratitude for those who have supported you on your journey to Commencement. And, yes, this Mother's Day weekend, let us applaud our Mothers.

Receiving this honor today is particularly meaningful due to my deep respect for the University and the strong commitment by the faculty and staff to the success of the student...a commitment to quality and excellence.

Yesterday, when this honor was announced at Amerikam, everyone in the manufacturing plant cheered, because they know the significance of being associated with Ferris State University. They have experienced the strength and influence of your students and faculty through the Amerikam/Ferris Project. This project provides students a manufacturing engineering experience that prepares them for the real world of manufacturing. For over 30 years, Amerikam and Ferris have collaborated on this project, preparing a job ready workforce.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates how a university learning experience like the Amerikam/Ferris Project can be impactful well beyond a small framed moment of life.

It is a true story of two (2) soldiers serving their country in Iraq. They were sharing thoughts about home, the importance of family and friends and their lasting memories. Through this conversation, they realized they both had completed the Amerikam/Ferris Project while attending Ferris State University. An immediate bond was established; a reminder of purpose, of what is good about their lives, and for one soldier, an inspiration to return to Ferris after his tour of duty.

It is not a small thing that when you come to Amerikam, you will find our American Flag on display 24 hours a day, and our Amerikam banner and Ferris State University banner side by side. Isn't that symbolic of what we are accomplishing in our business and industry collaboration? We are forging and building upon American ingenuity and creativity. We are doing our part to strengthen the vitality of our Nation in a global economy. I believe it is our responsibility to do so.

In manufacturing, we live product launches. We study and prepare for any changes that may occur in the manufacturing process that may affect the success of the product. And, in the preparation of your career launch, Graduates, it is important to include the understanding of the elements of change. Change will always be a great part of your life. How do you live with change and still have a successful result?

Dr. Kim Cameron has addressed the Ferris State University Commission for the Future. In his book, *Making the Impossible Possible*, he describes the "Abundance Approach to Change." It focuses on resilience, flourishing and vitality, not merely reaching a goal.

And that is my wish for you, Graduates, living life fully engaged in a meaningful way; certainly, by using your educated mind, but also your educated heart to make a difference in the world.

Yes, President Eisler, Ferris State University has a compelling story in higher education in America. You have my full personal and professional commitment to continue to tell that success story.

And, as Ferris State University begins to celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I charge and encourage you, Graduates, to carry that strong tradition of excellence into the future.

You, Class of May, 2009, are the future...and the future is now!

Congratulations, Graduates! God be with you and Bless you.