

Ferris State University Commencement Address
December 15, 2007
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Hello! I am deeply honored to be here with you today.

Well, this is it, graduates! You have persevered, put in all-nighters, made it to *most* of the classes *most* of the time, and now we all applaud your accomplishments and diligence.

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to great places!
You're off and away!

Sound familiar? It probably seems to your parents as if it were just a few years ago that *they* read Dr. Seuss to you.

And parents: Have you ever wondered *who* these graduating people *are*? Dr. Richard Russo, an author and Professor of English at Colby College, said that sending your kids off to college is like “putting them in the witness protection program. If the person who comes out is easily recognizable as the same person who went in, something has gone terribly, dangerously wrong.” You graduates and your families have made a great investment of time, money, and undoubtedly sweat and tears. You made this investment in order to change. You are different people than you were before college. You are more aware of the rest of the world, you are prepared for the next chapters of your life, and you are **Bulldogs!**

You have brains in your head
You have feet in your shoes
You can steer yourself
Any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And you *know* what you know.
And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.
(Dr. Seuss again, of course)

On behalf of the Ferris faculty, I want to say that we have thoroughly enjoyed mentoring and teaching you graduates, and *we* know that you have

the foundations on which to build your futures, in a future which we can barely imagine.

According to “Did You Know” accessed on YouTube:

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that traditional college graduates will have had 10-14 jobs by the age of 38.

Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley forecasts that the **top 10 jobs** that will be in demand in 2010 **did not exist 3 years ago.**

So, we have prepared you for jobs that do not yet exist, jobs that will use technology that is yet to be developed, technology which will be devised in order to solve problems that we do not even know about yet!

But Ferris has been preparing students for the future **for 123 years**, so far.

That is why Ferris focuses on preparing you to think critically, to serve your community, to be creative and globally aware, no matter what your field of specialization. Some of you will soon be entering your professions, others will be continuing your educations at professional schools and universities. But you will all continue your education *long* after completing formal training.

Woodbridge Ferris said “When you think that your education is finished, don’t hang around any longer: take chloroform and make a permanent departure.” So you can see that valuing lifelong learning goes back to the very beginnings of Ferris!

Woodbridge Ferris’ goal was “To make the world better.” You, our graduates, will continue the accomplishment of this goal through your contributions as workers, parents, citizens and alumni.

You may be leaving Ferris, but Ferris will never leave you. Ferris has changed you in ways that you will discover over the years. And Ferris will always be there for you. Now and again, send an email to a favorite professor, or to one who taught you something that you later learned to appreciate. We love hearing from you.

Well, commencement speakers cannot resist giving advice, so I would like to pass on just two ideas that I learned from others which have been valuable to me:

First idea: It is what you do most days that matters. I learned this from Dr. Richard Paul, a leader in critical thinking. It is an antidote against perfectionism, against being overwhelmed by all that you know you should do. You are going to have to organize your life, your jobs, your family's lives, and so forth. You know that. Just do not get stressed about things not being perfect every day. They won't be. Your *values* will influence your planning and *regular efforts* will make a great difference over the years, even though you will have to compromise and just do the best you can many times. **It is what you do most days that matters.**

Second idea: Refuse to accept unacceptable alternatives. I read this in my grandmother's *Readers Digest* when I was about 9 or 10, and it has served me well when I have been faced with undesirable choices. When you feel that you cannot accept the alternatives that are offered, don't! I have always found that there are other ways if you just look for them. **Refuse to accept unacceptable alternatives.**

Our concluding Dr.Seuss.... Ready?

Oh, the Places You will go!
..you're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting
So..get on your way!

Go Dawgs!