

Your Journey  
By Margaret Ann Riecker  
Ferris State University Commencement Address  
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at The Rankin Center

Thank you President Eisler, members of the Ferris State University Board of Trustees, faculty and staff of the Michigan College of Optometry and College of Education and Human Services, other distinguished guests, parents, friends, family – and most importantly the Class of 2009. I am proud and honored to have been awarded a Doctorate of Public Service and to be one of you today at our commencement.

Ferris State is a very unique university and I congratulate you on your good judgment in choosing a University that has provided you with highly relevant skills valued in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century marketplace. I understand that the vast majority of this year's graduates already have a job or educational placement; that may be a record in today's economy.

But a word of advice:

As you know, in a flat world, successful careers are nonlinear—requiring agility and resourcefulness – witness last night's two optometry speakers. Some think of career progression as climbing a ladder, but in reality today, there may not be clear, linear steps. Rather than ladder climbing, consider your career progression to be more like wall climbing. Successful careers require the ability to constantly spot opportunities and challenges, the ability to figure out how to make those opportunities work to your advantage – and that of your patients, students or clients.

With each move along the face of the wall, you see the path ahead differently. Be prepared to move sideways, sometimes down, in order to advance to your destination – and it may not be the destination you originally expected!

Interestingly, at this year's Small Business Administration's "Michigan 50 Companies to Watch" event, Entrepreneur Josh Linker, founder and CEO of ePrize, the No. 1 online contest developer, stressed that characteristics like hard work, tech skills and integrity are "just the ante for playing" -- the real driver of success is creativity. And he offered several ideas for fostering creativity at work, from "edgestorming" ideas out to the very boundaries of possibility to "opposition theory" where you reflexively zig where the competition zags to "big bang" thinking where you assume you'll be able to fundamentally change a product or market and then consider the possibilities, and to "the long list," intentionally

forcing yourself to create a long list of ideas or possibilities, on the theory that at least one will be terrific.

You may not think that this applies to you, but it does. You are the people who can invent the future of your fields – and outcomes for those with whom you work.

Although many of you think that you are finished with those textbooks -- at least for a few years -- I cannot suggest strongly enough that you continue to learn – languages, science, music, history, art – and learn about the diverse cultures of the people with whom you live and work.

Knowledge is increasing geometrically and we need to keep on top of it ---not only in your own field but in others.

Recently a faculty member from the University of Michigan's Medical School suggested that in some specialty areas, it would be beneficial for physicians to be recertified every year because of the rapid increases in knowledge.

Success in our knowledge-based economy may well require expansion into fields unrelated to your core area of interest now as well as fields that have only recently come into existence or will come into existence in the future. Ferris has given you the skills to continue to stay in the forefront!

Congratulations and best wishes to you as continue your journey in these exciting times. Thank you.