

Commencement Address

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Good morning! And Thank You Dr. Scott for such a warm welcome and introduction. Welcome to the Board of Trustees, To President Scott and his Senior Staff, Fellow Honorees, Honored Guests on the platform, and especially to all of our graduates and their families and friends.

I am truly honored to be here today and feel privileged to be able to share in your very important day. As you have heard, I too am a graduate of Adelphi as is my mother and my brother. I am pleased to announce that we will be breaking with tradition today as a way to honor my mother. Tradition dictates that when it is time for the students to process up to the stage, they do this in order of the date the school was founded. The Ruth S. Ammon School of Education was founded last, so they normally process last. Today, the degree candidates from the Ruth S. Ammon School of Education will process to the stage FIRST!"

This is a big day for all of you. It is wonderful to see so many members of your family and friends here to share the day with you. I think it is safe to say that our success happens for many reasons, a big one being the love and support of those around us.

I imagine you are wondering how your college days have come to a close so quickly. I too, still wonder about that.

The only difference is that it has been 37 years for me. I now realize that you must be thinking I am pretty old. I like to think that I am wise and experienced.

You have spent the last few years building a foundation for the future and you are now about to begin your journey toward the rest of your life. I do hope that you will not be a stranger to Adelphi. I travel back to my college from time to time. Actually, I was in Connecticut last week. I love returning to campus reminiscing about the dreams that started when I was there, remembering my friends and mentors and sometimes, just stepping back in time to a very special period of my life, sometimes just to get grounded on what is important for me. I treasure the friendships I have kept from that part of my life.

So, what does that have to do with this commencement address? Nothing, it's just that when someone gives me a microphone and I have a captive audience I like to pontificate. Actually, there is no telling how long I might speak for. Seriously though, I gave this address a great deal of consideration. Not just because my mother, my brother and I all earned degrees here but because you have earned the right to have a good commencement speaker. So, I asked myself over and over, what should I say to these women and men who have so much ahead of them? What could I share with them that may have meaning?" One of the many times I reflected on this day, I happened to be driving, and it occurred to me that my life has been very much like being on a highway. My trip down that road is my unique story, but you are about to create your own journey. I certainly hit a few pot holes along the way... even ran completely off the road a few times but have completely enjoyed the trip. I am hoping that sharing some of my life's lessons will be helpful to you as you embark on your journey.

Because now... **you** are in the driver's seat. You have been preparing for this moment... studying... learning... You could even think of your education as a way of filling your tank with gas so that you can move full-speed ahead. I know many of you, especially the parents, are thinking, "When did gas get to be so expensive?" If it is any consolation, I think this is the only time we can say gasoline was an investment.

I have been on the highway of life for a while. In fact, some of you may be thinking, "Wow, she's probably ready for the tow truck to arrive."

Despite our age differences, I can tell you that you will face many of the same challenges in your journey. And I bet that already, you are encountering road signs encouraging you to follow this path... or that. One of my favorite quotes is from Lewis Carroll who said, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there."

So, here you are... on a glorious day of celebration... but maybe feeling some mixed emotions about the future because of the tough economic times. Please don't be discouraged. When I graduated, unemployment was at seven percent... we were in the midst of an oil crisis and a gas shortage. Things looked dismal, but these conditions are transitory... they pass. Success is possible under all kinds of situations.

I am here to offer encouragement, and I think I can do that best by sharing with you four of my own life lessons. You can either commit them to memory... or tweet them... or even text them to a friend. I recently read where the number of text messages sent and received in a day outnumbers the people on the planet. I know, that is pretty arrogant thinking you want to text my words to you. I really don't think you will but, I hope that some of these thoughts might be of use as you embark on your journey. The four lessons are about the importance of patience and persistence... recognizing defining moments... having passion in everything you do... and focusing on your gift.

Let's begin with the first one: having patience and being persistent. Like some of you, when I started working, I didn't really know where I wanted to be 10 or 20 years later. My greatest concerns were in the present day, how little money I really had and how few vacation days I had to do all the things I wanted to do even though I didn't have the money to do any of them. I didn't expect to stay in the job I was in... but then I wasn't sure what else I wanted to do. All I knew was that I wanted to get there quickly.

So, one of the first life lessons I had to learn was really about how to be patient and persistent. If you plot my career on a map, you will see that along the way, I took many different paths... and at every turn, I faced a new challenge... gained a new experience.

Singer and teacher Bernice Johnson Reagon describes it this way: "Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are."

I think my greatest detour occurred about three or four years into my pharmaceutical career. I realized that what I really wanted to do one day was to run a large business, whether it was Dupont's pharmaceutical business or whether it was one of Dupont's other businesses. I made two decisions: one was that I would get an MBA and two, that I would take advantage of every opportunity to learn every aspect of business. I believed that would afford me the best credentials to one, get the job, but two, to be successful once I landed it.

I am pleased to say how much Adelphi's MBA program meant to me and how much of my success I attribute to Adelphi. I must say though that the campus sure looks a whole lot better than when I attended in 1980!!!!!! But, then again, the campus in 1980 sure looked a whole lot better than when my mom graduated in 1941. She told me there were all of three buildings back then.

The decision to take on many different roles required great patience and persistence. As a woman in the business world in the 70s, there were many times I saw that big flashing sign that said DO NOT ENTER, MEN WORKING or Proceed with Caution. Sometimes I felt stuck, like I was sitting on the Long Island Expressway in a massive traffic jam on a holiday weekend and there was no way to get through.

But I was in the game, and when I saw how each job played a very important role in my eventual success, I began to enjoy the ride a lot more. That is the beauty of the journey. If you are patient... and persistent even when people are blocking your way... you can arrive at some beautiful destinations.

It is important to remember too, that you may have some fender benders along the way. You may not succeed at everything you try. That is so okay. The only think that is wrong is the failure to try.

The second lesson I would like to discuss is a bit more amorphous and more difficult to see, but I call it "defining moments."

Here's what I mean: You will have moments in your life where you have choices. Only later will you realize the importance of the decision you made. For example, early in my career I was working in the laboratory, and I was asked to make a decision that ended up having a huge impact on my future. I had begun a master's program in Biochemistry and was planning to continue on for a PhD. But I was offered a position in an entirely different department. It was a position that required a science background but would clearly put me on a business track. It was a difficult decision. I took the job and the rest is history. I would never have been positioned to lead Dupont's pharmaceutical business, much less buy assets and create my own company, had I not taken that job. That, Ladies and Gentlemen, was a defining moment.

Throughout your career and life, you will be offered choices. It is important that you take the time to think through what those choices may mean for you and for your loved ones. And when you choose a certain path, you may not know how other paths would have worked out, but you will know that you made your choice in an informed manner. Think about how much time you

put into your decision about college. These four years have been an experience that has shaped you. Make sure you approach your career with the same level of thoughtfulness. And, then, never look back, only forward. Poet Henry David Thoreau said, “Never look back... unless you are planning to go that way.”

My third life lesson is about passion. Passion is what sets us on fire, excites us to wake up every morning and to excel at whatever we do. Think about your best relationship to date. Remember when you first met him or her. I bet you couldn't stop thinking about that person, day and night. That is passion... that is magic.

Well, that same type of passion should be exuded in your work. Otherwise, I would tell you that you need to find a new line of work. We ultimately spend so much of our time at our chosen work. Our co-workers are like a second family. Yet, studies indicate that well over 50 percent of Americans are unhappy at work. Being excited about what you do is what makes you successful. If you have to go to work each day and pretend to be happy, you will ultimately fail. You can only be successful being who you are and being excited about what you are doing.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself about what you truly love? What are you good at? What do you want to accomplish in life? What obstacles are stopping you? And I would encourage you to go through these questions in your own mind... and then ask the people you trust the most to answer them with you. If you don't, you may find yourself simply accepting what you think you *should* be doing rather than taking the time to figure out what you *want* to be doing.

Now, that is not to say that if you take this approach that every day will be a winner or that you're not going to want to turn the car around some mornings. As I mentioned earlier, you will need patience and may have to take a few routes that are not the most exciting. But in general, you should be enjoying your work... and gaining experience that will move you toward your goal.

There is a business writer who calls this the “blue flame.” It's that intersection where passion and ability come together and ignite a blue flame in you – a powerful force that helps you get to where you want to go.

Transforming a dream into reality takes hard work and discipline. Your passion can get you through the rough times. When we started Endo our dream was to make a difference in treating pain so people could live better quality lives. There were many rough spots in getting the business going but our passion in the dream made it a whole lot more manageable.

Fourth, I want everyone to remember that you each possess a special gift. It is yours and the sooner you realize it and become proud of it, the more successful and happier you will be. If you take nothing else away from this talk, it is this that I hope you really listen to and absorb. Society tends to focus on the highest grades and the best physical attributes. I liken this lesson a bit to high school. Many of us wanted to be the head cheerleader or the captain of the football team. Of course, I was all upset when I didn't become a cheerleader. My parents kept telling me, “Don't

worry, you have other gifts.” I naturally thought they were crazy... didn’t know what they were talking about and thought that they were totally not helpful.

But let me ask you this: How many of you know the name Mark Zuckerberg? Do you think his high school buddies ever imagined that at age 23, he’d co-found Facebook and become the number one young entrepreneur in America? Or how about Chad Hurley, who co-founded YouTube, and comes in at number three on the list of young entrepreneurs at age 30?

I love the example of Susan Boyle. People were very quick to dismiss her because of her physical appearance... they made fun of her unfashionable knee-length dress, black pantyhose and white shoes. But when she began to sing on the show “Britain’s Got Talent,” wow, the world suddenly wanted to know Susan Boyle. On Saturday Night Live, Tina Fey impersonated Sarah Palin and clocked in 32 million views on YouTube... President Obama’s victory speech generated 18.5 million views. But Susan Boyle received more than 85 million views for one of her videos.

These are just some examples of individuals who identified their gifts and ran with them... regardless of what everyone else was expecting or thinking.

It took me 44 years to realize what my gift was but it was there. My gift is in my ability to relate to people... to communicate with others in an honest and sincere way. Over time, I was able to develop confidence and do something very meaningful with my gift. What I want you to take away is this: Don’t wait 44 years to recognize your gift. Learn what it is today and use it.

When you enter the work place you will find some people who are natural born speakers; others will be able to take the lead on a project; and you will meet some individuals who are incredibly smart. Don’t be taken back or be intimidated. Maybe your gift is compassion or the ability to listen well and then help the team gel or, maybe it is to analyze problems. Whatever it is, every gift is needed... every gift is precious. Don’t undervalue yours, use it with confidence.

So, in closing, Dr. Scott is about to give you the ultimate Driver’s license. You are entering the highway of life. Along the way, be patient... watch for those defining moments... have passion in everything you do... and focus on your gift. Don’t be afraid to get lost from time to time. Do not be afraid to get directions when you need them. There is no GPS system that directs our life yet.

I wish you a wonderful and very successful and happy journey. Thank you.