

“University Greatness”

As prepared for delivery by

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Chancellor Betz, faculty, graduates, families and friends, good morning and thank you for the honor of addressing you today.

I stand here, speech in hand, a graduating student of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. I am no greater a person than any of my fellow graduates, but find strength and comfort in a sea of black robes, together with common purpose before my eyes. Today’s ceremony is only then solidified by the attendance of supporters we hold so dear to our hearts.

The desire to seek the essence of learning and push the limits of human understanding are fundamentally constructed within each academic discipline, whether undergraduate or graduate,

traditional or technological, social or scientific. The power of knowledge brings us all here today to applaud the tireless, enduring, proud graduate. The honor bestowed by this fine university produces a symbol of great respect for those who promote honesty and humility to be vital in the quest for truth and knowledge.



Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain during WWII, said quote: “Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” My fellow graduates, this is a day measured and honored with success. The road to success is not

without obstacles and is often paved with difficult choices. Only by perseverance do we as human beings move into a realm filled with hope and inspiration. This desire to expand our horizons and truly gaze into the beauty of this world sum up the feelings associated with today's graduation.

The aspirations and expectations of obtaining a degree have been met and are now rewarded not just by a formal piece of paper, but by the compliments of friends, hugs from family, handshakes from faculty, and the proud exuberance from distinguished guests.

The steadfast quest for intellectual enlightenment is not easily attained. Long hours, short deadlines, and various time constraints consist of only a fraction of obligations and responsibilities today's graduates have surpassed. Not without merit are the people who have willingly lent a hand and brought us into new dimensions rested in ethical responsibility and moral integrity. Embodied in this outstanding university is the professor, who engages and guides the student through the steps of learning. These professionals teach us, train us, and shape us into the being we so willingly have become.

This is a university that exhibits a blend of urban and rural solidarity, as well as a holistic oneness with the environment and education. It stands out as a college that not only serves the student who is a local resident, but the student who is from a farm, the student who is a commuter, the out of state student, the international student, or the student who simply chose this respected university for none other than a solid education.

Few would argue that graduation is the end of academic growth and emotional development. It is vested with new insight so future endeavors can be accomplished, such as paying off student loans, getting a job, and finding decent transportation. Others include traveling, marriage, or continuing on with further education. When one journey ends, another begins. Through the perils and promises of life do we as graduates seek fortune and fame. The fortune may initially be of monetary value, but humbleness and generosity are not embraced by those with fortune, but by

those that are less fortunate. The fame may initially be of glamour or grandeur, but simple acts of volunteerism will truly elevate you to stardom.

My fellow graduates, I hope that when all the layers are peeled off that the core of your inner being is that of compassion. This is what the future of our world needs: sincere compassion. We can crunch the numbers, study the graphs, measure the tables, and test for validity, but without compassion, society slowly fades into an apathetic creature, void of ethnicity, reluctant to diversity, and resistant to culture. His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." It begins with us, and we are not alone. And if you think about it, that's a very encouraging thought.

There is no question that we don't always get what we want. I will be the first to admit that. But I don't let rejection consume me. When I want something, I simply ask for it. *I ask for it.* I don't use anger or intimidation. Again, it's no surprise that we don't always get what we want, but I think of all the times I didn't get what I wanted simply because I didn't ask for it. But when you ask for something, you also need to give. If you ask for respect, you need to show empathy. If you ask for fairness, you need to uphold equality. If you ask for justice, you need to promote peace. And today, I ask all of you to be proud of your accomplishments and continue the path that allows you proceed with dignity and honor, because you have already asked for it. Thank you and best wishes to the graduating class of 2006.