COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

FOR

ERIC PERSILY

Hello everyone! I want to thank the faculty and administration here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ University for giving me the opportunity to speak to all of you, and to all of the graduates, It’s a real honor and privilege to be here today to celebrate the accomplishments and future successes and contributions of the Class of December 2012. I want to congratulate each one of you and I also would like to extend a special thank you and acknowledgement to the families, friends, and all of those special people who support and encourage these great students. Alfred, Lord Tennyson very famously said, “I am part of all that I have met.” The successes and accomplishments of our students and graduates, and actually each one of us, is largely dependent on the love, support, and wisdom shared by the people in our lives that care about us and for us, and vice versa. Everyone here is to be congratulated for being a part of a bigger and far-reaching picture, so thank you all!

The Tennyson line I just quoted is fairly famous, but not many know the lines that follow. “Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untraveled world…” To me, that untraveled world signifies the unknown, or that which is yet to be learned. This group bears a lot of distinction-of the 64 graduates; just about every area of academia and accomplishment is represented, and talk about “it takes a village….” If we placed all of you in one locale, I bet you would all be able to create and administer an entire community! (**Say this with enthusiasm and wait for the laugh)**. Our graduates from this class represent the following fields and areas of study:

2 Accounting

8 Biology

9 Business Administration

5 Communications

1 Education-Biology

1 Education-Social Studies

17 Executive MBA

1 English

4 General Studies

9 Masters of Business Administration and Leadership (MBAL)

3 Political Science

1 Public Policy

1 Psychology

1 Radiology

1 Sports Administration

Nine of our grads, or roughly 14%, have completed his or her coursework in less than 4 years, some of you represent the first generation of college graduates in your family, and that is **REALLY** an accomplishment, and **ALL** of you are to be commended on your hard work, focus and well-deserved achievements. On an optimistic note, it is also very encouraging for all of us, and especially current students who will follow in the footsteps of these grads, that 84% of this class has either secured employment or Is planning to continue on to graduate school. (**If there are certain students or individual achievements you want to mention, do that here**). I’d also like to mention \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for her achievement in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for doing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Tennyson mentioned the “Untraveled world,” and through that travel, whether metaphoric or physical, we continue our education. Although you graduate today, guess what? This is just the beginning!!! Your time at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name the college**) was just the prep work for the **real** education you’ll earn throughout the rest of your lives. I cannot stress enough, the urgency and importance of consciously seeking and absorbing knowledge throughout life. As a physician, I definitely put in my “hard time” at school, and although I completed my “formal” education years ago, I am required to continue my education in order to maintain my license. Today, if I were to pick up those textbooks that I used 25 years ago while in medical school, the same ones that, at the time, were so critical to my gaining a complete and “modern” knowledge in my field, it would seem as though I were reading something written in a foreign language! Think about the innovations we’ve all seen since you first started your college careers. Someday, you’ll look back and tell your grandchildren, “I remember, ‘back in the day’ when I started college, iPads weren’t even invented yet!!” (**Wait for the laugh**). For the record, the iPad debuted in January of 2010…. a **LIFETIME** ago!! And, come to think of it, probably by the time your grandchildren are the same age that you are now, they’ll be tele-projecting images and ideas or something completely beyond our sphere of current knowledge!! Remember that some of YOUR grandparents were the first to witness having a television!! That’s just a small example of how times are changing and how essential it is for each one of us to keep up with **speed of life**.

Throughout your high school and college careers, each one of you has borne witness to how this world is changing-very rapidly. The information super highway has been glutted with facts and data that make our lives easier and more complex at the same time. We have seen financial devastation cohabiting side by side to business triumphs. We’ve seen entire countries fail economically while countries used to laboring in Communist environments are actively establishing the next generation of billionaires. We’ve seen certain technology companies literally change the face of the world, and most recently, we’ve seen… way too close and personally… the ravages that can and will be wreaked by the “**new**” Mother Nature. Although it is essential to learn about the past and honor heritage and tradition, it is urgent that our educational process be perpetual. We **cannot** stop learning.

It’s crucial to stay “educationally hungry.” Almost a generation ago, around the time that most of you were born, a man named Steven Covey wrote a book. It was called “**THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE**,” and although it was written as a guide to those in the business world, it has been acclaimed as a guide for anyone. The seven habits are basic, and among them we find:

* BE PROACTIVE
* BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND
* PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST
* THINK WIN-WIN
* SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD
* SYNERGIZE
* SHARPEN THE SAW

The common root in all of these habits, and in being able to reap the benefits of the wisdom in this book, is very simple, and that is the desire and motivation to learn. I can tell you what each of these steps means, or you can exercise your own native curiosity and take the time to initiate the process. As Covey says in habit one, “BE PROACTIVE.” Don’t wait for the information to come to you. Go and seek it. Set goals. Learn how to focus and prioritize. Keep an open mind and remember that if your neighbor or partner doesn’t win, neither do you, and vice versa. Remember that communication is a 2-way street and if people don’t fully understand what you are attempting to communicate, then you haven’t done your job of expression properly. Learn how to empathize. Place yourself in the other person’s shoes and approach all situations with the respect that **you** would want. Appreciate each person in your life for what they contribute and how all people mesh and enhance each other in some way, shape or form. Play to the individual’s strengths-including your own. Learn how to sustain yourself, your assets and your talents. If you don’t understand something, do the research. Ask questions. Don’t fall victim to the arrogance of ignorance. Embrace your mistakes, take responsibility, and learn from them, as they are your most valuable teachers.

Gandhi said, “Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.” Graduates, you are all in an enviable and exciting position. You stand at the precipice of the rest of your lives. You have the foundation required to get to the next level in your journeys through life. Now it’s your turn to build upon the foundation and to work towards maintain the goals you have created and targeted. Consider your tenure here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the “appetizer” of a lifetime!! It’s time to go for the rest of the meal!! It’s your turn to take what you’ve learned so far and transform it into a lifetime’s worth of inspiration and sustenance to support you physically, mentally, emotionally and financially, and to then contribute to others, both those close to you and to those who will interact with you from now on. You have a responsibility to yourselves, your family, friends, colleagues and community, to contribute to make this world a better place. Remember those who have inspired you and prepare to inspire those that follow. Life is an endless series of lessons and your time here has taught you well. I wish all of you the best and I look forward to learning of your continued success in whatever you choose to do.

Thank you all!