GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone!! I’d like to congratulate those of you that are graduating today, and to **all** of you, I want you to know that it’s great to be back here at Temple University. I’d like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. Although I graduated almost thirty years ago and have had many interesting and challenging experiences throughout my life, it is very gratifying for me to be able to return to the environment where I gained such a priceless foundation and education. It’s great to see all of you here and to remember what it was like when I attended Temple. I believe that as we propel ourselves forward in life, it’s essential every once in a while to take a look, acknowledge where we’ve been while recounting the lessons learned, and focus on the path that lies ahead.

Each one of us brings our unique perspectives and talents to any table, and in the professional world, the more I experienced, the happier I was to have had the opportunity to attend this fine school. I am not the kind of person that easily speaks of my accomplishments. Instead, I prefer to acknowledge the mentors and influences I have had in my life that have encouraged me to find the common sense, curiosity and wherewithal within myself to succeed in this world- and please keep in mind that the concept of success is highly personal. (**If there are any professors or other people from the school that mentored you and might be there, it might be nice to acknowledge them**) In fact, I have vivid memories of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who both guided me and inspired me to follow \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in order to achieve my goals. Perhaps we should consider the word “accomplishment” as preferable to success. I encourage each one of you to use your education and insights to identify and attain the goals you set for yourselves in life.

I support each one of you to emphasize your uniqueness, but let’s face it, someone, somewhere on earth thinks you’re very special. They’re **sure** that you were born special, but the truth is in the professional world, in order to be considered as special, one has to do special and even extraordinary things. The other truth is that each one of you is capable of doing those special things and achieving **YOUR** goals. All it takes is a strong foundation-and we **KNOW** you already have that, common sense, focus, dedication, and resilience. It also takes self-confidence and that comes with experience along with the rest.

You’ve gotten through your course work and you’ve made it this far. You are standing on the precipice of your ultimate inheritance-and the professional world and the rest of your lives are right **out there**-right on the other side of that door (**Make a gesture to indicate the exit**). It is now up to **YOU** to choose how to live your lives. There will invariably be people you meet that will be less than optimistic. I could call them “doomsayers” but I want to encourage you to focus on the positive. If someone tries to discourage you, remember that attitude is **THEIR PROBLEM**-and **NOT** yours. Keep your eye on the prize-whatever it is, and envision the completion of each goal you set for yourself. It’s also okay to set small goals in order to practice the sense of accomplishment-creating and achieving those small goals are like warm ups to the big event. They serve a purpose and assist in propelling you forward in whatever direction you choose. Doomsayers may ask you “Why?” when you discuss your dreams and ambitions. Remember the best response is “**WHY NOT**?” If they don’t believe, that’s THEIR problem. I believe the streets of America are paved with gold-you just have to know how and where to look for it, remain positive, don’t succumb to negativity or ambivalence, and don’t rest on your laurels.

Some of the life lessons I’ve learned have served me well, and I want to share them with you. As I said earlier, if you want to be special, make sure you do special things. Be **present** in **all** facets of your life. Really take an interest in what you’re doing. Find your passion and pursue what you love doing every day, and even on off days, ask yourself, “What am I supposed to be learning?” I promise you, your education **NEVER STOPS**. We’re placed here on earth to learn and then to teach. There are no accidents. As you focus on the work, think of the lessons you’re learning and watch how your knowledge base evolves. Believe in what you do and be ready to defend what you believe in. Also be ready to learn from those who might know more than you do at the time. Never forget that people will always value your thought process and they’ll pay you to think. The better you think, the more refined your thought process, the greater the odds will be of recognition. And remember the quote, “Do what you’re supposed to do when you’re supposed to do it whether you feel like it or not.” That’s the essence of being a professional. Think about it. Think about the professionals that you pay to serve **you**. Think about what would happen if you showed up for a doctor’s appointment and they didn’t feel like seeing you. Or think about paying a few hundred dollars for a concert ticket and the musician didn’t feel like playing more than one or two songs. Show up. Bring your “A” game. Get the job done. Move on to the next challenge.

I hope I’ve given you some food for thought. I want to thank all of you for inspiring me and reminding me what it was like as I walked off into the professional world from my own graduation at Temple University and I have to say, it’s been a really good ride for the past almost thirty years. I want to extend the most sincere congratulations to each one of you. The adrenalin and enthusiasm in this room is palpable. Take this moment with you and go out and stake your claim in the world. Continue to learn and always remember to focus on the future while doing your best in the present. The future belongs to you right now, and time passes quickly. Savor every moment and learn from the good times and the challenging times-those are the **REAL** teachers. I look forward to learning of your continued achievements and may we all meet again and enjoy each other’s stories of adventures in business and in life. After all, **WHY NOT**?? Congratulations! Thank you all!