**COMMENCEMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**Barry Goldfarb**

Hello everyone. It's a great privilege to be back here at Colorado State University. I want to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me here today and I have to say, I'm feeling rather nostalgic. As I walk around the campus and stroll through the halls and buildings, memories come flooding back about the times I spent attending this great school. Some may even call what I'm feeling a "flashback," but hey, we won't go there. ***(If you want to make a joke you can say,* "or it could be the Lipitor***-or whatever medication name might evoke a chuckle-* **EVERYONE's blaming EVERYTHING on THAT lately" *and wait for the laugh)***. Let's just say that I probably speak for my generation when I tell you that I'm really grateful that for the years when I was a student, and probably for several after ... and I'm sure that many of my contemporaries agree, that our "formative years" were NOT lived under the microscope of social media. The most incriminating evidence we might have of our "youths well lived" are a couple of stray Polaroids and some really fuzzy super eights. ***(Wait for the laugh*).** Today, EVERYTHING is ripe and ready for publication. In previous generations, the most detailed records a person may have maintained was a diary or a journal. Today, everyone has become a real, live CURATOR of life. Several years ago, people made mix tapes to give friends an idea of who they were and what they liked through the music they chose. Years ago it was enough to be a deejay. Today? The aspiration is to be no less than Spielberg or Warhol as young people express themselves. I mention Andy Warhol because although you may not realize it, generations ago, he said, "in the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes," and here we are. I'm sitting in a room filled with SUPERSTARS!! ...come to think of it, Andy probably made up that term too!! Every one of us has the means to promote who we are, what we like, and how to market ourselves. The opportunity for connection and outreach is unprecedented, and it's just beginning. Just remember...the players may change, circumstances evolve, and although the evolution of man and technology may be throwing new forms of curveballs to challenge our resilience, the basic message is still there. "Congratulations. You graduated. Now go and make something of yourself." Okay, great.. But **HOW**?

The other day I was driving around in LA and I saw a billboard for the new Vince Vaughn movie and it reminded me that everything we need to know...or to be more specific, everything we need to **learn**, is usually **right in front of our faces**. We just have to get out of our heads and pay attention, observe what is going on **right in front of us,** and see how it applies in the sense of, " what is the meaning to **ME**? What can I learn from this? Anyway, the tag line for his new movie is, " You're never quite ready for what life delivers." The premise of the movie is that Vince finds out that over the course of many years, he's "somehow" fathered like, 533 children. What do you say after you've said "**MAZEL TOV**???" (**Wait for the laugh**). Of course I mention this as an analogy. What are the surprises each one of **you** will have to deal with as you leave CSU? **WHO THE HECK KNOWS?** I know someone whose personal mantra is, "I don't know what I don't know," and that's the cold harsh truth. For those of you that are graduating today, you're armed with a powerful tool, and that is your educational foundation...and that's exactly what it is...a **FOUNDATION** to build on. We **DO** know that with education, awareness, common sense, a dedication to the quality of your life, and the ability to be in touch with your own inherent personal value and sustainability, you'll be on the right path to handle at least a couple of hundred of those unknown "kids" or problems or crises or opportunities.

As you handle those "growth opportunities"....because let's face it, **EVERYTHING** gives us a chance to learn and grow, you'll get more and more familiar with the most interesting and fascinating person you'll ever meet: **YOU.** And it is now your job, your mission, to live a worthwhile life and that evaluation depends on your point of view, and your point of view becomes refined and developed based on what you allow yourselves to experience. Some of you may want to stay within the boundaries and borders of the life you've lived within so far. You may feel your commitment is to the community in which you were raised, and that's great. If that's what you choose, just be the best that you can be. Take what you've learned and learn to contribute.... To your family and friends, to your professional life, to your community. Get in the habit of challenging yourself. Find out what it is that drives you, what it is that keeps you interested and maybe a little uncomfortable, and set goals for yourself. No matter where you are or what you're doing, you can learn to stretch beyond the scope of what you had previously achieved. Make it a practice. Remember, you're just beginning the most exciting part of your lives. Life after college graduation brings new meaning to the term "independent study." It's now **ALL** up to you. If you are the kind if person that chooses to move on to another town or city, a new adventure, an exciting career, I say the same to you. **CHALLENGE YOURSELF**.

Whatever you choose to do, you will be more in the spotlight than any generation that has preceded you, In fact, you already **are** in the spotlight. You may not even realize that since you've all really come of age in this explosive era of technology and connection, that life was not like that, even a generation ago. Successful businesses all have one thing in common. Each one has had the ability to convey their identity in a way that people recognize and remember their message. You do the same. I know facebook is already **"So 2012"** ***(wait for the laugh)***, but think about the social platforms toward which you tend to gravitate. Think about the faces and places and friends who distinguish themselves on those platforms. They're brand building In their early twenties!! So are you! You're learning to control the medium and the message and that took previous generations **years** to master!! The point is, you have new tools in your arsenal to use wisely to insure your chance of personal and professional success. Use them. Those new tools guide you to attaining the presence you will need to convey your message, whether it's social or professional. Back in the "good old days," a resume was enough. Now you need a website and a linked in page, and on and on and on. I am a man who is fortunate enough to be In the position of mentor to many young people. I meet dozens of future entrepreneurs every semester and each one has an opportunity to pitch a business or a concept to my colleagues and myself. It's kind of like "Shark Tank 101." When someone has an opportunity to see a group of contemporaries in a level playing field, it quickly becomes evident that some have the "gift." The gift is the ability to distinguish themselves from the crowd, to be aware of his or her unique ability to maximize an opportunity, and I want to tell you right now, **every one of you** has what it takes to be the unique one- no matter how crowded the playing field might look. I just read bits of an interview with Chelsea Handler and what she said was simple. "There's room for EVERYONE." Go out and build your personal and professional brand. Believe in yourself. Be vigilant. Don't take no for an answer and also **embrace rejection**. It's the greatest gift you **never** wanted!! If we're really lucky, and as I said earlier, we're willing to really get to know who we are and how we're impacted by circumstances, then rejection teaches us what NOT to do. It also helps us to develop resilience and that essential piece of "outerwear ," a thick skin. Really... Try it!!

I read a staggering statistic. There have been more inventions and patents registered and recorded in the past ten years than in the **THOUSANDS** of years preceding this decade. That's just one barometer of the innovation and competition we all face in this day and age, but to me, I am **inspired**. Each one of you is standing on the threshold of the **real** beginning of your adult life, and now is the time to choose. The pessimist will think that the field is too crowded. "Why bother?," but the person that will succeed will look at the world ahead of him or her and say, " Wow! How can I jump in to this excitement?" Competition is fierce. That's the one thing that is common to every generation, but you've got an edge. It's **YOUR** turn. Sure, it seems like the preceding generation leaves some kind of mess for the next generation to "fix," and it's time for you to all get to work and use what you've learned to show us how it's done. It's time for you to enter the workforce and use what you've learned, but mostly it's your turn to pay attention and see what's really needed and wanted to make this world, YOUR world, a better place in which to live, and keep in mind that "better" is relative. It's perpetual and kinetic and changes all the time. Remember this explosion of technology and creativity is just beginning. We have no idea where it's going in the long run, except that I heard that Lady Gaga plans to perform in outer space in 2015. Can you imagine the price of front row seats for **THAT** performance? ***(Wait for the laugh***)

The lives we are living in this day and age are exciting, scary, inspirational and challenging, and like I said earlier, YOU have what it takes to succeed. Maintain a passion for life, a curiosity for what might be just around the corner, and a respect for everyone you meet, because you never know who that stranger next to you might be. In the interview with Chelsea Handler, she describes an incident she experienced recently on a plane. A woman was sitting a couple of seats behind her and she was laughing...**.REALLY LOUDLY**. She turned to her friend and asked him to tell the woman to take it down a few notches. Chelsea said, "...after all, I can't go up to her and tell her... I'm **FAMOUS**!!" So her friend went back to somehow politely ask the woman to shut up, and wouldn't you just know, she was laughing that loud because she was reading Chelsea's book! Appreciate the ironic moments in life, like the one I just described. They're gifts intended for you to learn a little more about life and your relationship to the world around you and all of those observations and gifts will hopefully guide you to a life well lived personally and professionally, and the ability to precise the challenges as gifts. Congratulations to all of you and I look forward to hearing the stories of how each one of **YOU** conquered your world!!