**Class 39 – Yes, we did it!**

Good Morning…Honorable dean, distinguished guests, Wharton faculty, fellow graduates, staff members, and the families & friends (**Do you want to add “who have graced us with their presence in our lives and”**) who have undoubtedly given up more than anyone else who will **partake in this ceremony** today. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to be here ~~today~~ and to have the honor of speaking to all of you. Wow! We’ve got a ~~the~~ full house today - **5% Palmer scholars, 5% Palomino scholars, and 90% of the middleclass. (Since you mention full house, do you want to make a little joke and say… “All aces… no jokers?”)** Today we are here to celebrate accomplishments and to recognize the incredible support and encouragement that inspires each one of us in everything we do. I would like to take a moment to thank some of the people that worked so diligently to ensure our core learning experience was as focused and productive as possible. Each one of my fellow graduates entered this program with already unfathomably demanding schedules and it is a triumph of will, determination, cooperation, alacrity and intention that saw us through to this moment.

There are some other people to whom we owe more than a mere debt of gratitude. Someone once said, *“Life is not a solo act. It’s a huge collaboration, and we all need to assemble around us the people who care about us and support us…”* As I look around this theater today, I see husbands and wives; partners and children; friends, neighbors, fathers, mothers, siblings, and bosses. None of us were raised in or live in a vacuum. All of us have been motivated, encouraged, supported, and fed (both literally and figuratively), by the most important people in our lives. They may not always understand what we do or why we do it, but they **do know** how to give us space when we need it, nourishment - when we’re empty, motivation - when we get complacent, and food-for-thought - when we might hit a wall… or two… or three… Our families, friends and neighbors are our fuel. They’re the objects of our algorithms, the case studies of our lives, and P-Values for our hypotheses. Without these P-values we are insignificant as they are our muses who give meaning to everything we do. To all of you muses, mentors, mediators, and munchkins here today, **thank you!** We know you have sacrificed a lot so we can pursue our goals.

For the record, we **do** wish we could have seen that baseball game, danced that dance, did that grocery run right before the storm, cleaned our living-rooms, and changed a few more diapers …. Okay…. maybe **not** **that** one…, but we are grateful for every moment and memory we have been able to capture while on this eternal quest for even more knowledge. There were sacrifices, time away from our kids, time away from husbands and wives, sleep deprivation - lots and lots of deprivation. In the end it is all worth it. Our MBA is **not an accidental correlation**, but **a causation of all your collective sacrifices**. If it’s heavy and hard to comprehend, your freshly minted Wharton MBA can help you understand ☺.

Each and every one of us in this graduating class came to Wharton with a completely different set of hopes and dreams. When I first met many of you I have to admit, I had some preconceived notions about who you were and why you might be here. **For** some I actually wondered why they were here at all but as I got to know you, I was pleasantly surprised by the warmth with which I was received and the many life lessons you have all shared. If you look around this room you will see an amazingly diverse group of people who have stories that are as unique (**didn’t want to repeat “diverse”)** ~~often as diverse~~ as they are. Did you know Loretta was born in Canada and she loves the arts? Do you know that Josue loves his profession and he is simply living the dream? One of our more interesting fellow **grads** is full of paradoxes – he hails from Texas, is an attorney, a democrat, **and** a pastor. Dan Jones, our father came to Wharton for what I would consider an amazingly lofty goal…Dan will utilize his Wharton education to better serve his calling! How amazing is that? And then there is my friend James Ngo… when I met this Californian I thought, *“How cheesy* ***was it*** *when he said, “****I want to change the world!****”* As I got to know him and we became friends, I discovered there was much more to this California boy. James really **DOES want** to change the world with his education and you know what….I believe he will.

We have to pay attention to the road we travel as well as leave an extraordinary impression on the path along which we have traveled ~~we have~~ ~~traveled from~~. While I have had contact with people from different walks of life before, none of those experiences prepared me for the diversity I would discover here at Wharton; I am very grateful for all of that. Wharton made us work for it. I knew that by the time I was standing here…on this stage…I would be better prepared for my life as a leader than I ever could have been attending another school. One of the things that I personally have learned here at Wharton is that the relationships we create in life are just as key as the things we learn in the great halls of our prestigious universities. The connection we make on the journey put us that much closer to the tools we will need to meet our goals and if we can also help others along the way. Well, that just makes us better humans as well! **Kofi Annan said, “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” It is the responsibility of everyone in this room to learn, to share, to teach… and it’s an unbreakable cycle**.

Getting back to those great support systems we had during our tenure here at Wharton, let’s remember for a moment… The Karate Kid had Mr. Miyagi……. Rocky had Mickey… so did Rocky II, Rocky III, Rocky IV…. Mickey must have been exhausted! We really lucked out - we had a wonderful team of Peggy Bishop Lane, Juana Droessler, Doug Collom, Bernie Birt, and Steve Hernandez who all made sure that we stay**ed** out of trouble and not lose focus. I know I speak for my fellow graduates when I say that we all want to extend limitless and sincere appreciation for their patience, guidance, and wisdom. To all those world-renowned teachers who have taught us…thank you. Thank you for taking the time to ensure that we are all better equipped to meet our goals in life and career. We will each take a small piece of you with us as we move forward.

Big thanks to our Rocky Tim Kung and fashionista Karen Chan who always kept us busy in karaoke’s, dinners, stylish parties, and showed us the places we wouldn’t have explored ourselves. Thanks to Wharton administration for keeping us on track, **the** delightful caterers for feeding the hungry, Le Meridian staff for patiently handling our late-night troubles, flight attendants for remembering our names, and all those Uber drivers for shuttling us from place to place.

My fellow graduates, each one of you is here because you have demonstrated your commitment to making a difference in the world. You’ve already proven your mettle. What makes you extraordinary is your insatiable thirst for learning and experience. Your quest for excellence inspires. Your ability to adapt and absorb concepts and theories is bar raising. The passion with which you participate in life at every level is remarkable. Each one of you is a proven professional, **yet none of you is satisfied with the status quo and neither am I.** Those who are uninitiated in the ways of the game-changer may find our determination puzzling. **Let them.** The one thing I’ve discovered throughout the time spent in this program is that it is refreshing to find partners and comrades united in unique yet concentric goals. We all have direct experience of the adage, *“With great power comes great responsibility.”* As we continue to make our way in this world at every level, and as our minds and collective conscious are awakened with all that we’ve had the privilege to witness, let’s remember the words of Lao Tzu. *“The sage does not hoard. The more he helps others, the more he benefits himself. The more he gives to others, the more he gets himself. The Way of Heaven does one good but never does one harm.”* The point we all have to realize as we accept responsibility for creating and implementing new paradigms in business, technology, education, and the arts is that it is up to us to go forward and responsibly establish a new order of “considerate competition.” It is our mandate to find the way to humanely and effectively initiate a spirit of concern that is refreshed and inclusive. **You might have LT’d ethics class, but please do not LT your life!**

My journey to Wharton was not an easy path. Although I knew that I had wanted to reach for a higher education, life happened and it was nearly two decades before I would finally find myself at the doors to this prestigious school. I knew that I wanted to go to one of the best schools in the nation but I also knew that my choice had to be one where I was challenged to better myself. The decision to attend Wharton was an easy one once I determined that it would offer me not just an education but a life experience…I was not disappointed. Tory Burch, a fashion designer, said, *“It only takes three things to make it, but nobody agrees on exactly which three.”* After my time at Wharton I believe that my opinion of what three things it takes is (i) a diverse life experience (ii) the tenacity to keep meeting the challenges that life presents you with (iii) and then meeting those challenges and life head on with the best you have to offer. My fellow students, **Wharton has given us all of that and much more.**

One of the great points of attending and completing this program is that we entered at a time in our lives and our careers when we had the capacity and life experiences to really appreciate the opportunity to participate. When we’re younger, no matter how precocious we are, we’re just that-much-younger. We learn those lessons and somehow *“get them to another level,”* but to have the chance to **really** take part in a curriculum when we have the personal depth and desire to make the most of it is priceless. When we’re kids we dream and pretend we want to *“change the world.”* You know what? Congratulations! We’ve made it to a point in our lives and careers where that goal is **possible**! We are graduating from one of the most prestigious programs in the entire world and we’re here because we are committed to doing the hard work and getting the job done. **The road that lies ahead for each one of us is limited only by the person in the mirror.** Each one of you has already achieved extraordinary accomplishments. No pressure my friends…. But with your Wharton degree, **the game has been upped.**

There is no mold to break, it’s **our turn** to create and form the **NEW** structures of business, medicine, technology, fashion, and governments of the future. Oscar Wilde said, *“Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.”* There goes my $180,000 down the drain ☺. The bottom line is that **you**, graduates, are your most precious resource. **Trust your gut.** Look around. There’s not that many of us here. We possess a rare combination of curiosity, comprehension and commitment. It is **our mandate to continue to remain in touch** with the drive that brought us to this place. We’ve been given a precious toolbox filled with opportunity. It’s time to build a future in which we can function inclusively, effectively, and successfully. Tom Brokaw once said, *“It’s easy to make a buck. It’s a lot tougher to make a difference.”* It’s time for us to take what we have learned and see the world and its challenges from a different point of view. It’s time to build our own museums, our towers of tech, and our temples of innovation. It’s also time to work on discovering new ways of strengthening our bonds and commitment to the world in which we live. We’ve self-selected to be titans of business, and with that comes great responsibility. With commitment and camaraderie, I know we will do what’s needed to make this world a better place.

**To those with whom I have taken this journey…yes, we did it.** We made it through this amazing experience and I am a better person for having met each and every one of you. I am very proud to stand here with you today as we take the next step in each of our lives. And as we continue on I would ask that **you stay true to yourselves.** Sunita Mishra – go improve healthcare, Paul Martin – keep those windmills running and make this planet green, Priyanshu Singh – go find out new ways to predict earthquakes so you can save millions of lives, John Dummett – keep our bottles full, Erica Stephens – never stop sorting those M&M’s, Josh Kanter – go figure out new ways to increase loyalty, Rel Lavizzo – keep making those sexy jackets, Pradeep Fernandez – if it’s not Boeing, I am not going, and Craig Replogle - thank you for your service as a Navy SEAL in keeping us safe. Let’s all meet and surpass our goals!

**The future is bright! Now we have the Wharton MBA - Let’s all change the world: change the world in our own ways, and change the world to make it a better place for all! Congratulations graduates and thank you all.**