**14323, Nathan Conway – Commencement**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

When the school contacted me and invited me to give the commencement speech today I was surprised but very pleased. Many years ago I sat where you sit now, a new graduate of this fine school. Some of you may have travelled some distance to attend this school but I’m sure we have quite a few graduates who, like me, are from this area. I was born and raised in North Central North Dakota and worked on my grandparents’ farm from the age of ten. I love it here. In \_\_\_\_\_ I graduated from Minot State University with a BS in Accounting.

As new graduates you have a great foundation with your education but you’ll need more than just a great education if you’re going to succeed in your chosen career. There are a few things that you will need to develop so that you will succeed and grow in your personal and professional life. My success in business has been attributed to three things, a can-do attitude, great mentors and a passion for helping others whether achieving their career goals or feeding and educating children in Africa.

My can-do attitude I can attribute to my family. My parents and my grandmother showed great faith in me to learn to do work that was older than my years when I began helping out on the farm when my grandfather died. They didn’t just tell me to wait until I was older, they encouraged me and taught me what I needed to learn. In addition to my family I have been blessed with several mentors in my life, each coming alongside me in a time in my life when I needed some direct guidance either in my personal or professional life. Each of these mentors took the time to teach me what I needed to learn and to guide me as I learned the lessons for that season. They answered my questions and showed confidence in me that they knew I could accomplish what was needed. Last, but not least, my passion has been to help others as I was helped. No one can grow into what they want to become all by themselves. We all need help somewhere along the way. I decided in the beginning that just as other people mentored me I would reach out and find others to help and mentor to achieve their goals regardless of the choice of their goals.

So, my first piece of advice to each of you is to find a mentor to help navigate your career and guide you in finding your way in your journey, to guide you in putting together the finances to reach your goals, and to find the time to walk beside you as you walk this journey. Most mentors will only walk with you for a portion of your journey. They will help you with a specific part of your journey such as finances or determining the right stepping stones in your career climb. No one can be an expert at everything so you must learn to find the right mentor for the place where you are in your professional journey.

Next, if we want to succeed in life, whether it’s personal goals or professional goals we must do so with passion. We must first decide what our goal will be. What can we pursue with unbridled passion and let nothing stop us? What do we want to accomplish more than anything in our life? Once we know that we must learn all that we need to learn, and we must seek out mentors for specific lessons and pour our entire self into reaching that goal. We can’t go after it with half a heart. We must be committed to finishing the race. That means we must calculate and know what will be the cost of the journey and make a commitment to that cost before we begin the race. Then, once you have achieved your goals I hope that you will make the decision that I made, to reach out and help others to achieve your goals as your mentors have helped you.

When you put together these elements, a can-do attitude, a passion to meet your goal, mentors to help you, and a determination to become mentors to those who come after you, then you will not only succeed in your career, you will find a satisfaction within yourself that is unmatched. For when you first succeed and then help others succeed you have created a legacy for the work you have done.

All of you have worked hard to come to where you are today. You have studied and worked and tested until you are swimming with all the knowledge you have acquired. Right now you are not exactly sure what you are going to do with yourself for a short while until you begin your new career, even if you start a new job tomorrow. You have been immersed in being a student. But, now you are no longer a student on a campus, you are a student of the world around you. You are undoubtedly nervous about stepping off this campus into the new life you have planned. But, be assured that you have done well. You have completed this first season of your new life by graduating from college. Have confidence in the work you have done and the lessons you have learned. Be inspired that you can go out into this new world and new life that you have planned for yourself. Believe that you have what it takes to go out and make a difference in the world around you for yourself, your families and for those less fortunate that you find.

Congratulations!