GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

MARK McCOY

Hello everyone. It is a great honor and a true privilege to be able to have the opportunity to speak to all of you today here at the commencement exercises for the Keller Graduate School of Management. I would like to take a moment to extend my most sincere gratitude in acknowledgement of the faculty and administrative staff of DeVry Keller for your thoughtfulness in nominating me to address this audience. To the parents, family and friends here today, I would like to recognize each one of you for the love, support, and encouragement you so selflessly offered to us. To my fellow graduates, I am proud to be a part of this group. I know how hard we’ve worked to arrive at this moment and although I do believe that the real work begins once we leave this environment, I think we all realize that in order to succeed in life we need ideas, encouragement, enthusiasm and a strong foundation. I truly believe those conditions are present within each one of us. Now it’s time to take our dreams and live them.

When I was invited to present this commencement address I tried to draw inspiration from the greats. I looked to people like Maya Angelou who said, “If you don’t like something change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” I looked to e.e. cummings who said, “ It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” I searched through the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald who encourages us with, “Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.” I looked to the inspirational actions of Michelle Obama and the leaders of my community who have provided such wonderful models of encouragement and motivation. I thought long and hard about the real message I wanted to convey to you and in the beginning of this process I had my hesitations. I doubted whether I was a worthy messenger. Then I remembered something that means so much to me. Knowing that everything we do in life provides valuable lessons, I realized it didn’t matter how simple my message was or is. It still touches the core of who we really are, deep down inside.

What’s that message? Simple. **DREAM BIG**. Now more than ever, this world, this country, your workplace, your family, THIS COMMUNITY… **YOUR COMMUNITY** needs people who are willing to dream… and who are willing to work at making a difference in this world. As a society we may be more advanced technologically than every before, but we can’t get fooled by the gadgets that help run our lives. We must never forget the humanity we need to express in order to live a fulfilled life. Now more than ever we must always keep in mind that anything worth achieving is worth the hard work. Remember that someone once said, “Don’t sweat the small stuff…. and ultimately it’s ALL small stuff.” No matter what we may face and no matter how difficult we may find our circumstances, there are people that walked the path before us and they struggled and they persevered and they made small strides that led to bigger ones. The road to greatness is paved with small pebbles of accomplishment. When placed together they form a highway of wisdom, knowledge and progress.

So yes. Dream big. Practice determination. Find something that tugs at your heartstrings. Stretch to achieve your goals. Embrace failure…. to an extent (**Wait for the laugh**) and remember that even failure serves a purpose. It acts as a guidepost and teacher. Some of the most valuable and unforgettable lessons are found in failure. Everything happens for a reason. Quitting is not an option. There will be times when you might just want to pack it all in but that will be your cue to look at the situation and ask, “What am I supposed to be learning **RIGHT NOW**?” Figure it out. Trust your instincts, your intelligence, and the educational foundation you have received. Believe in yourself. Trust the incredible power of the human spirit. Know that with every breath we take, the opportunity for success comes closer. Keep your eyes and ears open…. you never know when **the moment** will arrive. Be aware of your surroundings and be **vigilantly observant**. Everything we need to make it in this world is within us and around us. We get **one chance** at making a life for ourselves and as we all know… there is **no dress rehearsal**. So **Dream Big**. **Work Hard**. Take **nothing** for granted. Share your joy and wisdom. Ask for guidance when you need it and offer a helping hand to someone who might need you. The well being the future of this world is in our hands and it is a shared responsibility. I can’t wait to get started and I look forward to a bright and fulfilling future for each one of us! Thank you!