**15505, Shaun Uppal**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today to speak to my fellow students, all our family and friends, as well as the faculty and staff this school. There are some who try to say that the American Dream is dead. But, I am here to tell you it is alive and well and my family has lived it.

I am a first generation Indian American whose grandparents came to America with my parents with nothing in their pockets. My father was born in India and my mother was born in Uganda. My mother was a refugee who survived the revolution under the reign of Mobutu Sese Seko. My grandparents, my mother and her five siblings moved to Montreal, Canada with nothing. She is now a cardiologist. My grandparents on my father's moved to New York with my father and aunt. They came with absolutely nothing. My grandfather worked as a TA at 8am, then worked a check cashier at Sears and worked until 10 pm, then washed dishes making 1.85 an hour as a dish washer at Valley Steakhouse in Albany, New York, until 2 am. My father told me that when he was a senior in high school and he wanted to buy a school jacket. His college colors were red and black. He was too poor to afford a real RPI (his school) jacket so he bought a random red jacket and sewed the letters RPI on his jacket. My dad is now an orthopedic surgeon.

These are only my family’s examples of how perseverance overcame great odds. I know that we are not uncommon in this country. There are numerous other examples of people who had a goal and gave their all to work toward that goal and achieved great things. Our school motto is “Cor Unum Et Anima Unum”, or One Heart, One Spirit. When our heart and our spirit are in unity and we persevere to the end then we can achieve great things. Our Notre Dame community is like family and we support one another in all our endeavors. With the combination of our perseverance and our refusal to give up no matter what with the support of our Notre Dame Community we can accomplish just about anything.

I know that there is a certain sadness at finishing school. We have completed a season in life. But I want you to feel happy as well. I want you to embrace the inspiration of starting a new season in life. I want you each to recognize the good things that you have in life, many of them provided by parents who worked hard and persevered to accomplish much. But, I want to encourage you to all seek out your own dreams. Consider what you want to accomplish, determine what it will take to accomplish those dreams and goals. Then set you heart and mind to work hard and do whatever is required to accomplish those dreams and goals. Even if those goals and dreams change as you travel through life, you can still accomplish great things if you persevere and refuse to give up.

Good luck to you all.