**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RANDY RYAN**

Hello.... to family and friends, colleagues and faculty, Vice Provost \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, distinguished guests, students, and of course my fellow graduates of the Stony Brook School of Nursing, it’s a privilege to have the chance to speak to all of you at these commencement exercises. It’s great to see such a large and enthusiastic

crowd, all gathered to support this class and celebrate our accomplishments.

Graduates, as I look around at all of you, the word that comes to mind.... the expression that obviously means so much to me, is “**connection**.” For the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, this class has traveled a road together... we’ve studied together, attended classes together, formulated our future plans together..... and yes, we even... **SHOCKER**..... complained about test questions together.... (**Wait for the laugh**), and **ALL OF IT** served a purpose.... our connection acts as our “neural network” in our lives.... while modern definitions may limit that expression to computer language, as members of the medical community... and of life itself, the phrase gives us a little visual insight to how all of us are and will be intertwined... even after we leave today. We really have become a **family**. The poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson said, “I am part of all that I have met.” Although this ceremony represents the last time we will all formally be together, our mutual roots are not limited by simple geography. I know for sure that the memories we have made here will serve to fuse the bonds we have formed. We’ve done some great work together and in many ways, we created something beyond a network... we’re **FAMILY**. (**If you want you can say**)... we’ve traveled the same route together....and though we had fun while maintaining our purpose...it wasn’t quite like “National Lampoon Family Vacation” **FUN**.... **( or pick another funny travel movie the grads relate to and wait for the laugh**).... but then again, we didn’t need a scriptwriter to keep each other going...didn’t we all have a **BLAST** when over **TWENTY FIVE** of us attended the annual nursing convention in Nashville, Tennessee??? I know **I DID**!! We were together cheering each other on as our group learned members won multiple awards and scholarships... that was a highlight... and there were also times we needed consolation and agreement...and we were there for each other even more.

Today, as we prepare to take what we have learned and apply ourselves to healing, tending, and supporting others, I can’t help but smile.... remember all the passion and pathos we invested.... on **TEST QUESTIONS**??? (**Wait for the laugh**). Remember all the countless hours we spent studying, neurosing, **SOBBING** about how we thought certain questions were “unfair” on some exams?? That was just an “appetizer...” a little taste of what professional nursing would conspire to deal to us.... and you know what? We **SURVIVED** those tests.... we learned, and we realized that we **MUST** be prepared in order to serve the patients and professionals that will take up such an important part of our lives.

I want you all to know.... that as I stand here in front of this crowd, **I am ALL OF US.** Each one of us has a different story,different driving passions, and unique reasons why we chose to enter the nursing profession. As we leave here today, there will be one significant change... we will go our separate ways, but we will always have this shared experience. As we go on to the next phases of our careers, we will have to be vigilant in our studies. The attention we pay to our careers and how we practice nursing will determine our success. We will be on our own to make something of ourselves, and I am confident that each one of us will succeed. Our focus will be more independent and we will have to trust **ourselves** as never before. As the expression goes, “If opportunity doesn’t knock, **BUILD A DOOR**.” We will do that. Years ago, an author named Mitch Albom wrote a book about the advice he received from his mentor, Morrie. Some of you may have read it.... It was called “Tuesdays with Morrie” and it spent FOUR YEARS on The NY Times best seller list and was translated into FORTY FIVE languages... Heres some of Morrie’s advice:

* “The biggest defect we human beings have is our shortsightedness. ... we should be looking at our **POTENTIAL**.”
* “Do what the Buddhists do. Every day, have a little bird on your shoulder that asks, ‘Am I ready? Am I doing what I need to do? **Am I being the person I want to be**?’
* “If you’re trying to show off for people at the top, forget it. They will look down on you anyhow. If you’re trying to show off for people at the bottom, forget it. They will envy you. Status will get you nowhere. **Only an open heart will allow you to float equally between everyone.”**
* “Accept who you are and **revel in it.**”
* Oh.. Morrie also said, “It’s okay to cry.” We’ve got **THAT** one down!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Graduates, we have met the requirements... we’ve done our “hard time” in school... we demonstrated dedication and perseverance. We learned by **DOING**... not just **FREAKING OUT**, and saw that we were and are capable of being caring, compassionate professionals. We had incredible mentors and teachers like the Chair of the undergrad nursing department and faculty advisor (**please fix if necessary**), Dr. Carol Della Ratta, who shared her heart and soul and intention so that we would succeed. From being mentored by faculty members that **REALLY** invested their time, expertise, experience, and energy just so that **WE** have a shot at success, we **realized**... and remind myself **every day,** that “Through perseverance, dedication, and compassion**, ANYTHING** is possible.”

We now **OFFICIALLY** bid **FAREWELL** to.... thinking that we’re still students... although we will **ALWAYS** be learning...**today** is the day we become authentically **accountable**. Today is the day we take pride in our devotion to this profession. Today is the day we pledge to proceed with our careers as though lives depended on it... because they **DO**... today we pledge to empathize with patients, professionals, family and friends, and we vow to treat others with the respect and care just as **WE** would want to be treated.

I want to acknowledge all of the family, friends, and supporters of this graduating class. including mine..... Thanks to all of **YOU**, our dream has been realized. ...And from the “unfair test questions” to the inspiration of the faculty and encouragement from all of you, I really believe, and this is absolutely true for **ALL OF US**, that we are about to enter a profession that will have a seismic impact on those we treat. They will need our skills and common sense.... they’ll require our patience and our resourcefulness, and most of all, they will **REALLY** need our human touch. Each one of us has the ability to make a positive contribution to nursing and I **CANNOT** wait to follow our careers and lives as we officially enter this respected profession.

Congratulations graduates and thank you all!!