**EDUCATIONAL SPEECH**

**FOR**

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**Romans 8:34 “Who is he that condemned? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also make the intercession for us.”**

Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, students, professors, administrators, and distinguished guests, thank you all for coming together today as we examine our motives in life and education, and further our cause of understanding, motivation, and making a difference in this very complicated world of ours. Each one of us, when we’re born, has a mandate. We spend our lives learning and developing awareness of the world around us, what is expected of us, what it will take for us to accomplish our goals, how to identify challenges that come at us from every angle, and most of all, how do we cope? How do we build the strength to grow inside and to grow up? When do we finally discover our personal power and learn how to manage it in service to ourselves and those around around us? When do we realize that, **yes.... we CAN**?

Growing up, earning an education, opening our eyes and ears, hearts and minds, is not an easy process. True, precious, priceless learning **NEVER** ends. Even the most accomplished people face infinite and constant challenges, but it is the tests we face in life that build our experience, wisdom, and confidence.

The poet, Rumi, teaches us, “Don’t be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. **Unfold your own myth**.” A lot has been said, written, examined, debated, questioned, doubted.... I could go on... about the importance of self confidence and its urgent place in the process to success. Entire industires have been built on reminding us that, while we may not be “good enough,” this technique or that discipline, when practiced correctly, is a sure fire way to accomplishment. In many ways that’s true, but first, there’s the hunt we all must initiate.... the road we all need to travel... and that’s our own personal search for our **SELVES** as we find the strength, poise, and common sense each one of us has.

The Swiss American psychiatrist, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, teaches us, “People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.” That’s true of any kind of clarity... there needs to be a light from within. So how do we access this light? How do we find the confidence within ourselves to face life’s trials and find our confidence? Please don’t fall into the trap of thinking that everyone else “has it together,” and their game is “on point.” It’s not true.... those people are just more skilled at hiding and handling their doubts and insecurities. Those of us that are vulnerable, impressionable human beings, are not that different. It’s the way in which we approach issues and dedicate ourselves to finding the strength to overcome obstacles that distinguishes us from each other.

Every person in this room is capable of acknowledging and accessing self confidence and a sense of both inner and outer strength necessary to succeed in all aspects of life.... “But **HOW**?” you may ask... let’s see...

Much has been written about building confidence. Let’s talk more specifically on how to find and sharpen those confidence tools to support success... in every aspect of life. Anyone can access these ideas and techniques... please remember to disregard considerations like, “I don’t have the money,” I have no time,” “No one really cares,” or my favorite, “**I’m not good enough**.” I have **THREE** words for you doubters... **STOP. THAT. NOW**. Those thoughts are considerations. They are **NOT** who you **REALLY ARE**.

The first bit of advice I want to give you is.... think about something that you’re known for. Think about how you developed that skill, talent, or interest. Think of how people find you to get your opinion on that topic. **ACKNOWLEDGE** **YOURSELF**. When times get tough and challenges threaten to overwhelm you, remember that **YOU CAN HANDLE IT**. Learn to recognize and appreciate **EXCELLENCE**, even in the smallest ways, within yourselves, and then build your “inner library” of excellent things. This will support you in learning to expand your curiosity and appreciation about life, culture, knowledge... whatever you find fascinating. There are two things to keep in mind

* Interesting people are **interested**. They are engaged in life. They are creative problem solvers. They innovate and grow, even in the simplest of ways.
* There is an expression that teaches us, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” There is **NO ONE** in this room... in this college... in this world... that knows **EVERYTHING**... so open your minds and let the knowledge in! No joke... **KNOWLEDGE** is **POWER** and **BOTH** lead to success.

Remember what it feels like to help others that aspire to your talents or interests, or expertise, and recognize your own abilities.

Find **MENTORS**. None of you are or will be the first person to walk the path you’ve chosen. Each one of us is guided by a different light, but along the way, there are people that have traveled on similar roads to knowledge and understanding. You have access to teachers, clergy, upper class colleagues, interesting community leaders, former teachers, admirable family members... you get the picture... Make the connection. Ask questions for which you need the answers in order to advance your purpose in life. As college students, you live in a world that’s about to let your youthful ways go while embracing the responsibilities of adulthood. It’s important to use the time you have **NOW** to search for and use the resources that appear on your path.... and for those of you that might be doubters, remember this... a wise person once said, “If opportunity doesn’t knock, **BUILD A DOOR**.” What does that mean? It means get up and make things happen! Find your mentors and ask for guidance. If they say they’ll help, **GREAT**!! If they say no or give excuses, **THEY WEREN’T IT**. Find someone else.

To all of the family members, friends and community surrounding our students, this next tool has **A LOT** to do with you.... Give positive, thorough feedback and encouragement. Interact with the students in your lives with respect. Be **CONSTRUCTIVE** with your criticism and deliver your message with the intention that it is **understood**. Students interviewed in various studies have commented that “I can understand when I am told I have done something wrong, and I really appreciate it when I’m given praise if I do something well.” Another student said, “I feel more confident when I sense that a professor is genuinely concerned about my future and my success.” There’s something more I’d like to add. As you get older and enter the workforce, there will be a shift. Be prepared. Although it’s wonderful to receive compliments and encouragement, the day will come **SOON**... when you will be expected to **self generate**. When the compliments cease and the more present hard work sets in, that is the point at which you will be on your own. Consider encouragement to be like caring for and feeding a young creature. As they... and you... get older, you will be expected to not only feed yourselves and keep yourselves alive, you will be expected to succeed through your **SELF GENERATION**. It’s wonderful to receive recognition, but as adults, there will be other, different means of acknowledgement.... like compensation! It doesn’t mean you don’t deserve an encouraging word, it means your priorities have shifted.... you have learned the importance of doing an excellent job, and you no longer need constant or frequent praise. Congratulations!

And, of course, ultimately, through our faith, we find strength to go forward, to believe in ourselves, and to work towards how we serve in this world and how we find our inner peace, satisfaction and success in life. Remember, again, Romans 8:34, “...who is even at the right hand of God, who also make the intercession for us.” Live your lives with integrity, self-awareness, accountability, and confidence, and you will find on your own success.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” It’s time to find and **OWN** your talents and gifts and use them in positive, constructive ways. Go forward in your lives with trust in yourself and faith in the gifts you’ve received in life. This world is big and complicated, and as you get older and find your purpose in your family, your chosen work, and your community, you will be called on to do whatever you can to make this world a better place. That takes inner strength, faith and confidence. Remember that success is subjective... you define it for yourself, but it comes down to making a positive impact in this world and leaving a mark that is a testament to your presence, your commitments, and your belief that we are all witnesses and children of God. Here’s to enlightenment and success for all of us! Thank you all!