**[EZ Speech Writers No. 15540]**

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Remarks by Ms. Monica Gray at the commencement of the 2016 graduating class at Stratford University.

good [morning/afternoon/evening], ladies and gentlemen, it’s great to see you all here today.

i’d like to say just a few words to our wonderful graduating class 0f 2016, but before i do, i’d be totally remiss if I didn’t ackowledge dr. richard shurtz, our university’s president . . . his wife [first name] . . . dean resto . . . and all the fantastic faculty of stratford university. together, you’ve created a center of excellence and learning that’s second to none in the country, and for that, i think we should all be enorm-ously grateful.

now i’d like to start by asking you all a question, and that is: what do you suppose nursing, information science, health science, culinary arts, and business administration all have in common? think about this for a moment.

well, apart from the fact that these disciplines comprise the course catalog of stratford university, the thing they all have in common is that they all require *skills* — and i mean *real* skills, useful skills, hard skills, skills you’ve gotta master if you want to earn a living in any of these discplines.

now mind you, i’ve got nothing against a traditional liberal arts eduction, with its classes in literature and art and philsophy, and the like. but — except for teaching positions — what kind of jobs are out there these days for philosophy

majors, or art history majors, or literature majors or majors in the ancient languages of tibet? not too darned many, i can tell you!

that’s why i think you should all feel terribly proud of the fact that you’ve put in the hard work and the study and the discipline to learn some really useful skills. for in every field represented here today, there are jobs — real jobs, well-paying jobs, exciting jobs — just waiting to be filled by people with skills, by people like *you*.

you’ve accomplished a lot here at stratford; and while getting your education here might not have been the easiest thing you’ve ever done in your life, you’ll soon find the payoff in the many wonderful job opportunities that are awaiting you right now you in your chosen field. you’re gonna find doors opening and invitations to apply pouring in. the world is your oyster, as they say, and now, my friends, it’s time for you to start shucking.

with that, i’d like to conclude my remarks here this [morning/ afternoon/evening] with an admonition to all of you, and that is to strive always to be the best you can be — the best i.t. programmer, the best cook, the best caregiver, the best administrator, the best lab tech, the best professional in *whatever* field you’ve earned your degree. and i’m not saying

this merely as the expected platitude of a graduation speaker. i’m saying it because there are two very important reasons for you to strive always to be the best you can be.

the first reason is that this is the best way to get ahead.

let’s face it, ladies and gentlemen: you’re not going to start off right out of college as the ceo of a large corporation. you’re not going to begin as the executive chef at some swanky restaurant. you’re not going to become head of nursing the first day you step onto a hospital ward. you’re not going start off from jump street as some company’s chief information officer. on the contrary, you’re more likely than going to start somewhere near the bottom rung of your profession’s ladder. and the best and most reliable way for you to climb up that ladder is to be the very best “whatever” that you can be.

and the second reason to be the best that you can be is that you owe this to yourself.

why put in all the work you have, and paid all the tuition you have, and mastered all the skills you’ve have if you don’t strive always to be the best in your field. unless you go to bed each night confident in the fact that you’ve done that day the very best you could’ve done, you’re going to be disappointed in yourself. nobody can ever ask you, or demand of you, that you be *better* than you are. but they —

and you — can certainly ask and demand that you be as *good* as you’re capable of being.

this is the one true path to happiness in any job or profession that you might undertake. i hope and pray that each and every one of you will choose that path, instead of the path of mediocrity, of compromise, or of “just getting by.” i urge you to choose the path of excellence, and make stratford proud!

thank you.

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