**2019 New England College of Business Commencement Address**

**Delivered by James A. Aiken**

**INVEST IN YOU**

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**SHARE THE DIVIDENDS**

***Introductory applause for speaker: The audience settles and quiets: Wait for their attention.***

**Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening, Can you feel the Energy in this hall? Can you feel the Excitement in this auditorium? My-Goodness, I certainly can. I am excited to be here, and more importantly, I am extremely excited that YOU are here.**

**I am James Aiken, Dr. James Aiken, or in some circles, Dr. J. Should there be any confusion or resemblance to the Dr. J of basketball fame, it’s strictly coincidental, because as you can see, I am taller, (laughter). This paragraph, this humor, is optional**

**Thank you to the New England College of Business for their flattering and complimentary introduction. Looking out into this audience, of such bright smiles and unbridled enthusiasm, I am flattered to be one of your speakers, and this year, concurrently, one of your degree recipients. As I was listening to my introduction, for just a split-second I thought who is this guy? (lite-laughter). I realized it was me. Well, that ‘me’ ladies and gentlemen, is *‘you’*, you the person, you the individual, and the ‘you’ who will someday, in some manner, be acknowledged for not only who you are, but also what you have become. That developing legacy, those hallmarks, those future accolades, and that personal satisfaction, will be the result of diligence in your profession, integrity in your every action, faith in yourself, and to a very great extent, this institution, the New England College of Business**

**But first,………….In addition to those of you who we are celebrating today, we also want to recognize and extend a sincere New England College of Business welcome to all of those who are the human support elements in your lives, here with you today, or here with you in spirit. No man or woman is an island, so please take a brief second here to turn for a moment and let them know how genuinely appreciative you are of them, and everything they have done in support of your goal to be here today.**

***Pause***

**I want to share with you today two concepts,…….. the first being *Invest in You,* and the second, S*hare the Dividends.***

**INVESTING INYOU**

**Investing in yourself is providing the capital both literally and figuratively for you to grow, which if successful will generate an increase in personal and professional value. That increased value will certainly create dividends, of which you then decide how to disperse. But to initiate and sustain that growth there must be both material and non-material contributions to that investment.**

**I want to share with you the two primary ingredients, contributions if you will, that you can deposit when you invest in yourself.**

**The primary foundation, the footers, of this investment in you, must be your wellbeing. Nothing will grow if it is in an unhealthy environment. Deferred maintenance should never be any part of your mental or physical health. Nothing will run, nothing will operate at peak performance, if broken or in poor condition. Therefore, part of your job is to stay healthy, both in mind and body.**

**Secondly to grow as an investment, you too must grow: Success in any project, any profession, requires more than analysis, memorization, or presentation. To understand completely your mission, it takes a wide angle, a desire to see over the horizon. So as opportunities present themselves, or even if you must yourself create the opportunities, get out of that chair and confirm that the world is not flat. It is all too easy in this era of technology, to become stagnated. And I emphasize from my professional background, there is nothing more satisfying that to touch something that previously has only been a rendering, a photo, a schematic. By seeing, touching, and listening, that tactile moment completes a learning circle which is essential to a comprehensive understanding of the overall project**

**Share the Dividends**

**Let’s look at the dividends of a successful investment in you, and where do those returns go.**

**There are the obvious economic, free market, monetary dividends that are completely dispersed to the investors.**

**Then there are the dividends that need to be reinvested, as well as dispersed. Some of these are: patience, diplomacy, dependability, kindness, and thoroughness. There is one more, and I cannot emphasize to you how important this is to your sense of being, and that is integrity. Your integrity is your masthead, it is everything you stand for. It is your moral compass, your honesty, your loyalty, your sense of duty. If all else around you seems to come tumbling down, take your last ounce of energy, and save your integrity.**

**Above all else, share your dividends with as many as possible, and especially with those who were your initial investors.**

**It isn’t always an unfettered journey. There can be wrong turns, wrong advice, wrong decisions. We need to listen to the valued voices of those we trust. But as youngsters, as adolescents, and even as adults, advice can be misleading, incorrect, ill placed, and sometimes even biased. I am an example of that attempted diversion, that attempted steering, that idea that we are limited. But I would not go quietly into the night, I did not go down the pointed road. Whether consciously or not, I selected a different course, I selected higher education and service to our country, and that was the correct path for me.**

**If you take anything away from our time together today, it is this:**

**You will have struggles along the way. You will be challenged by your personal responsibilities and your professional career. You will be challenged by people, places, and ideas. You will be challenged for your code of ethics. And you will struggle with perceptions of what you say, and what you look like. But I will tell you right now, meet those challenges on their own level and guide them back into balance. Create viable options for the resolution of conflict with those who seek to keep you from accomplishment. Look your challenges in the face, and as you persevere, display compassion with dignity. And as you immerge from each storm and review the attributes that provided you with the skills for accomplishment, there will be none more prominent in that development, than The New England College of Business.**

**Thank you.**