

**University of Toledo Commencement Address**  
Friday, May 10, 2013

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President Naganathan, Chairman Zerbey, members of the Board of Trustees...

Parents, families, and graduates...

My heartfelt congratulations on this important accomplishment

I am honored to join you today for one of the biggest and most significant moments of your entire life.

I assure you there are many more to come.

I have crossed a stage much like this one three times.

They were all beautiful days. My family was there. I will never forget walking across the stage and receiving my diploma.

But there are two things I don't remember about any of those days...

The Commencement Speaker was, and anything they had to say.

I am sure today will be no different for you!

So I'm not going to stand up here and give you a long speech. I know your minds are on a lot of other things right now, and I am one of few people standing between you and getting the heck out of school.

So I know when to keep it brief.

There is a famous line from the noted philosopher of the 1980's, a guy named Ferris Bueller. I'm not sure if any of you know who he is. Ferris Bueller famously said: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Today is a day to stop and look around.

This is a moment you will remember for the rest of your life.

It is both the end of a long journey and the beginning of a new chapter.

Hopefully, you sit here today with big dreams and lofty goals – with the belief that, if you try hard enough, you can do something to change the world.

I know because my story isn't much different from many of yours.

I am the youngest of four brothers and sisters.

My mom and dad divorced when I was six.

Mom was a nurse.

My mom did the best she could raising us as a single parent.

I can remember mom working overtime so us kids could have nice birthday and Christmas presents.

**We understood the value of hard work, and we were always encouraged to do what we could to help out.**

I mowed lawns and shoveled snow before I was even a teenager.

I remember my first paycheck job when I started *part-time* as a janitor for Culligan water conditioning at age 12.

I remember riding my moped to work to clean toilets and sweep the floors.

I got to interact with the other workers and noticed the sales people who worked on commission and got paid more *depending on how hard they worked*. That stuck with me.

From there, I went to help open a pizza shop at age 15 for a couple who were trying to be entrepreneurs and risking their house to start a new business.

I saw both their commitment and their concerns every day as they counted the proceeds to see if they were going to make it or not.

**Again, I witnessed and learned the value of hard work.**

When I turned 16, I was able to work for an American Icon - McDonald's - where I learned that *if you have time to lean you have time to clean!*

Some here, I'm sure, know what I mean from your own stint at the Golden Arches.

When I graduated from high school I became the first in my family to go to college.

Some of you might be wondering, since my last name is Faber, if I went to Faber College. Again, like Ferris Bueller, that's a reference to my youth and a movie called Animal House.

Let's just say I know it wasn't the Germans who bombed Pearl Harbor!

So I went to college. And while I was fortunate enough to have some scholarships, I also had to work to pay the bills.

I worked my way through college and then paid for law school bartending, waiting tables and doing various other jobs.

I am honored to say that **Ohio**, the **Good Lord** and a lot of **hard work** blessed me in this Land of Opportunity.

That's why I believe in Ohio, and it's why I want to make sure that Ohio has a **strong future** for my family and my kids.

That's what the University of Toledo is all about.

You know, in my job as President of the Ohio Senate, one of the things I do every week is meet with the Governor and the Speaker of the House to discuss our legislative priorities.

Let me tell you, we are laser-focused on growing jobs and the economy in our state – and keeping people like you right here in Ohio to help us make it happen.

In order for our state to be successful in those areas, we need a well-educated workforce.

The Governor has said, I think all of us what agree, that “a higher education system that is working and is effective can be one of the greatest assets that the state has, because what companies care about is the quality of the workforce.”

We expect you to be a big part of the future of this state.

Some of you are getting your undergraduate degree here today and have plans to continue your college career.

Others of you will take the degree you’ve earned here and enter the workforce.

For others, this isn’t the first time you walked across a stage. Maybe you lost a job or just wanted to gain a new skill. Today marks the start of a new career.

Whatever situation fits you, you are doing this to better yourself. To provide more for your family. To get ahead.

And in turn, that betters your community, this state, and ultimately, this country.

We all take different paths. But just as I learned growing up and I’m sure you know as well – the path of hard work, determination and living with integrity will always end up in success.

There may be bumps, twists and turns along that road – that’s life. But staying true to those foundational principles will keep you on the right course.

I often remind myself of what President Teddy Roosevelt once said about public service, and his words are worth repeating here today.

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; ... who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Graduates, my challenge to you today is to live those words.

Be a leader. If you want to make a difference you have to get in the game.

Show courage and determination – even if you come up short. And, believe me, you will come up short.

Abraham Lincoln lost at least eight attempts to win public office or positions of leadership before eventually winning the presidency.

Thomas Edison tried more than 10,000 times before he finally came up with a successful light bulb. He famously once said, “Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

The Wright Brothers spent years flying – and crashing – gliders before that day in December of 1903 when their flyer took flight for about 120 feet in about 12 seconds.

Five years later, they would be welcomed to the White House by President Taft, who presented them with medals and commended them for – quote – “keeping your nose right at the job until you had accomplished what you had determined to do.”

They came up short, again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming.

Finally, find a worthy cause greater than yourself. Determine to make a difference.

I am going to be candid with you this afternoon. Your country needs every one of you at this moment in our history.

We need your energy, your talent, your vision, and, most importantly, your leadership.

As Teddy Roosevelt would say, you are already in the arena. From here, life will mar your face with dust and sweat and blood as you work toward the triumph of high achievement.

Earlier I started my speech with a line from that great philosopher Ferris Bueller. Perhaps more profound is a word of wisdom from the great Roman general Maximus: "What we do in life... echoes in eternity."

Today, the rest of your book is unwritten. You are the author, and the story is up to you.

I know with confidence that anyone walking this stage today can eventually stand before an audience of young people as the President of the Ohio senate. All it takes is a little hard work.

You attended this fine institution and finished the course. This school is now a part of your identity. I encourage you to support it, promote it and strive every day to honor its reputation.

Most importantly, never forget the people who invested in you. But focus now on investing in others.

In the words of Emerson, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Congratulations to you, the class of 2015. Congratulations to your family and friends who supported you in this achievement.

Some of those people are parents who dug into their own savings to make sure you got a good education.

Some of those parents allowed you to live at home so you could save a little money – I guarantee that was a sacrifice.

Some of you who are married, don't forget your spouse had to pick up all the extra work around the house, run the errands, manage the kids so you could attend class or get some extra study time in.

Maybe it's a friend or teacher who helped push you to the finish line. Tell them thanks.

And, most importantly, make sure you go out from here today and make them proud.

Thank you again for inviting me to share this special moment in your life. May God bless you in your future endeavors. And may you make the University of Toledo and all of Ohio proud with what you do with the rest of your life.

Thank you.