One Last Lesson: Committed to Excellence

As graduates you represent the collective hopes and dreams of our institution. Each of us at Ferris State University, faculty, staff, administration, and yes, fellow students, look to you as the result of our collective efforts. In some ways for me this occasion feels similar to the emotion one sometimes experiences as a parent at graduations, weddings, and when someone is leaving home to set out on their own. These are major crossroads that help define life. As a parent, friend, colleague, and yes, as teacher, you look at someone that you’ve tried to help guide, grow, and evolve, and wonder if you’ve done enough, if there is some last piece of information or advice that you might give that might make a difference. Is there something that you’ve forgotten to say or do that will help?

My experience in those situations is that one looks into the eyes of that student and discovers that they’ve changed and that a relationship that has been defined as teacher and student has become one of friend or colleague. However I hope you’ll forgive me if in the spirit of the academy and as an expression of our university’s hopes for you if I try to deliver one piece of advice, something I’ve entitled “One Last Lesson: Committed to Excellence.”

Among our graduates is a person who exemplifies the opportunities a Ferris experience can provide and is a true model of excellence. Her career includes service in both the Army and Marine reserves. A surgical assistant for ten years, she began to realize the limitations of that career for her. Although she knew little about the field, she heard about the plastics program at Ferris and moved ultimately to the new rubber technology area. At Ferris she developed the first plastics and rubber career day, which attracted 230 students from 10 high schools to our campus. She presented the success of this effort at an industry meeting in Las Vegas and was filmed for a History Channel program on the modern marvels of the rubber industry. At Ferris she has continually been recognized with scholarships and honors. A 4-year graduate, she has worked three internships at Acor Automotive in Cadillac and the North American Vice president for this firm created the position she will assume on graduation especially for her. On top of this she has maintained a perfect 4.0 gpa. I would ask that Kathleen Franks stand so we can recognize her.
On behalf of our university I wish you great success, meaning and fulfillment. As each of you sets out on the next step of your life and career you will face times of challenge, heartbreak, and disappointment. In those times when you might consider giving up, I’d encourage you to remember the wonderful example of Kathleen. Like each of you, their stories represent hard work, sacrifice, and determination.

Congratulations and best wishes