There is something truly magical about what we witness today. For those of us fortunate to have the opportunity to work with students here at our University, we know it and feel it. In the daily experience of college we don’t often have the opportunity to step back and to see what our students have become. Today provides that opportunity when we can pause, reflect and celebrate the truly life changing difference education can make.

Education is about knowledge and about people and about life. Education is a calling, something that must be experienced to be appreciated. It is also the story of personal achievement, and how talent, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice can create remarkable opportunities. Each of our graduates today has a story. I wish that I could tell you each one, as each is meaningful. I would like to share this one special stories with you.

This student graduated from Alpena High School in 2000. After a year of insurance estimating, he entered and completed the associate degree program in auto body at Ferris. At that time he had begun working as a salaried member of WalMart and one day saw an email cross his desk about a military leave of absence program there. In November 2005 he joined the Army with his brother and was stationed in Hawaii as a petroleum supply specialist, someone who refuels helicopters, frequently while they are still running. While deployed to Iraq, headquarters saw potential in his training efforts and he was field promoted two grades. While in Iraq, a commissioned officer stressed to him the importance of lifelong learning, encouraged him to complete a bachelor’s degree, and to pursue a commission as an officer. He was selected for the highly competitive Army program, Green to Gold, and could have chosen to study at any institution in the country. He chose to return to Ferris State University.

This graduate describes his return to campus as scary after being away. However the moment he stepped into the ROTC program here, he described it as home. Today he graduates from Ferris State University with a bachelor’s degree in automotive management. I would ask that this remarkable man, Aaron Jarvi, stand and be recognized. Just moments ago Aaron was commissioned as a Second Lt. in the United States Army. Major Meredith Harris, his commander and mentor in Hawaii and Iraq flew here from Hawaii to perform the honors. I would ask that Maj. Harris stand together with Aaron’s brother, sister, and other family members.

Graduates, as you approach the stage today I would encourage you to reflect back on the education you have received, and the many, many people who have reached out to help you. 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 this wonderful example of Aaron Jarvi and his determination to excel.

Congratulations and best wishes, Class of 2010.

David L. Eisler
President