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 the story of personal achievement, and how talent, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice can create remarkable opportunity. 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 two such special stories with you.

This first student came to Ferris thinking about pharmacy. After a semester that led to academic probation, she changed majors to psychology, moved immediately to the dean’s list and has stayed there. Studies at Ferris have been motivated by her interest in forensic psychology. These have led her to earn a minor in criminal justice together with a Michigan Correctional Officers Training Certificate. She is especially interested in what motivates people in the criminal justice setting. At Ferris she loves the psychology faculty who have assisted her. A first generation college student, she has worked three part-time jobs and been active both as a cheerleader and in the alumni gold club. Today with an ultimate goal to earn a doctorate in clinical psychology, she graduates with her bachelor degree and with a second minor in French. Amazingly with her many activities, she has completed her studies in just three years.

It is my pleasure to present to you a remarkable young woman, Tasha Lemmen. I would ask that she stand and be recognized. I would ask that her family also rise.

This second graduate has travelled a far different path to her undergraduate degree. She began first at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, before transferring to North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, where she completed her general associate’s degree. She found herself attracted to social work because of her desire to help others. As a single mother with a son, she began to commute from Petoskey to Traverse City to attend our social work classes, sometimes doing this three times a week. To support herself she worked 35 hours a week in a number of part-time jobs. Eventually she was able to move closer to Traverse City, reducing her commute to 45 minutes.
A year ago, at the very last moment she had the opportunity to travel to El Salvador with Professor Mike Berghoeff. There she did her service learning assignment with the Sister Cities Program. She became so engaged with this, that on her return to Michigan she worked with the Sister Cities Program to bring speaker Rosa Centenos to our campus last October. In the social work program at Traverse City she has been a leader in the Phi Alpha Honor Society, and has put her volunteer talents to work raising funds for Haitian relief and the Students in Transition Program in the Traverse City Schools. After eight years of effort she graduates today with her bachelor degree in social work, a minor in multicultural relations, with highest honors.

I am delighted to present to you Abby Jordan and would ask that she stand and be recognized. I would also ask that her family stand and be recognized.

Graduates, as you approach the stage today I would encourage you to reflect back on the opportunities 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 on 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 Tasha Lemmon and Abby Jordan and the difference education has made for them and for you.

Congratulations and best wishes Class of 2010.

David L. Eisler
President