Thank you President Eisler
Board of Trustees Chair Mr. Ron Snead
Board of Trustees
Faculty & staff
Distinguished guests, parents, friends, family members
and, most importantly, the Class of 2011 - you are the only reason why we are here.

I would like to take a moment to present my beautiful wife, Mary Ann. and thank her for without her support I would not be in front of you today.

Although I accept this honor I want to make it very clear that this is not an individual achievement… the journey to this point involved many. And here comes the first message of my speech - work with people you consistently learn from, both in terms of knowledge and character. The single largest impact in my life was, and is, to work and live with giving people. Find these people in your lives and stay close to them.

Dr. Richard Sauve and Professors Hashimi and Shangraw are examples of these types of people…. their efforts and partnership produce the best “workready” Survey Engineers in the country, resulting in a great benefit to the university, the students and industry.

This is an outstanding honor from an outstanding university. As the CEO of a multinational company the word “outstanding” does not come easy. If you have ever worked with Ferris graduates, as I have, you will understand that in this case “outstanding” perhaps is an understatement. Our employees who are Ferris State graduates are always our “go to” employees when we need to solve our biggest challenges!

Also, you know that as a Canadian I would have never been able to accept this prestigious award if you did not have such a great hockey team- When I learned of your victories over Michigan State it just reinforced the "fighting" reputation of Ferris students. Now that I am part of your alumni I am proud to say Go Bulldogs!

You are all here at graduation, so clearly you have a significant level of intelligence—the bad news is that intelligence alone is not enough to succeed. I have had scientists, researchers, engineers many with Ph.D’s who have worked for me who are frustrated that they don’t get more meaningful or bigger roles in the company. The sad thing for
me is that with this foundation of intelligence they should be able to have any role they want. But they often get stuck because they think of their intelligence as an entitlement. Use your intelligence as a tool to grow, to collaborate, to open your mind - not as something that holds you back.
Paraphrasing the Ferris billboard on the way into town - Knowledge in not enough.

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Also, use your intelligence to benefit from the dramatic changes the world is experiencing - let me explain

The world’s population will double during your working career. This single fact will dramatically change the lives of everyone on our planet. You as Engineering Technology students can use this to your advantage. In fact, we need you to work on the challenges that populations will have on our limited landscape and natural resources. Efficient use of natural resources and effective infrastructure will be key to our future.

In 2006 40 Exabyte’s of unique information was generated and recorded around the world - more than the previous 5,000 years combined

In 2011, just five years later we generated the same amount of information in two weeks - and 77 percent of the world’s population has access to this information via the internet

The lack of information is no longer a barrier in the world’s knowledge-based economy - everyone has access to the same information and everyone is your competitor

How does change impact the labor market that you will soon enter?

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates you (today’s graduates) will have 10 to 14 jobs by the age of 38 (in the past 10 years I have had six - all with the same company, but very different roles).

According to Richard Riley (former secretary of Education) - the top 10 in-demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004.

Technological innovation and information is now doubling every two years.

The result is that you need to be prepared for jobs that don’t exist yet, using technology that has not been invented, to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet. Don’t be frightened, be excited. There has never been a greater time in history where so much change is creating such incredible opportunity

Embrace this change. One of the biggest challenges I have as a CEO is helping employees to understand the value of change - change is where the opportunity is.
The only reason why I have the honor to be in front of you today is because I have consistently sought out change environments. These change environments include start-up companies, companies working on new applications, companies trying to solve real problems with technology. Why? Because this is where you can make the biggest impact.

Your teachers and Ferris State have given you the lifelong learning skills needed to embrace this change. Ferris State grads are well-known as self-made men and women. This will serve you well.

So whether you do it for the money, to make your parents proud, to further your career or to respond to a higher calling, take advantage of these wonderful opportunities that change offers.

But don’t let the pace of change wear you down. For those of you who are overachievers this pace of change can burn you out, as there is always more to do. Take time to celebrate your achievements and life’s blessings, there will always be more work to do tomorrow.

And as part of that celebration I propose a simple but powerful task…that on Mothers Day of every year you reflect on your significant accomplishments. Ask yourself - am I doing what I want, am I still growing, am I making a difference, do I understand what the change around me means? If the answer is “no,” you yourself should make a change.

When you have achieved success don’t forget Ferris as a successful alumni who would be better suited to partner with the university to help them make the most of the changing world.

In closing, my congratulations to each and every one of you. I see nothing but hope and potential in the audience.

Good luck, good fortune and thank you.