I bought a batch of baking powder and baked a batch of biscuits. I brought a big basket of biscuits back to the bakery and baked a basket of big biscuits. Then I took the basket of biscuits and the basket of big biscuits and mixed the big basket of biscuits with the basket of biscuits that was next to the big basket and put a bunch of biscuits from the basket into a biscuit mixer and brought the basket of biscuits to the bakery and opened a can of sardines.

I took a speech class at Ferris a millennium ago. I still remember this as an assignment. It’s all I remember from inside the classroom actually. —That doesn’t mean I didn’t learn anything at Ferris – just means I don’t remember.

And you won’t remember anything of what I will say here today either – I’m fully aware.

Congratulations class of 2014 – I salute YOU. And President Eisler and the Board of Trustees, thank you for having me; thank you for this honor.

So. I have 16 things I want to say. And I promise you I will be done in 5 minutes and 18 seconds – starting now (click). And that by the way was NUMBER ONE: Brevity. Shakespeare said “Brevity is the soul of wit.” (Hamlet). And writer Dorothy Parker said, “Brevity is the soul of lingerie.”

NUMBER TWO. When someone asks you what you want to do now that you’re out of school – and you say, “I don’t know” – and they say, “Don’t worry, you’re young.” Worry. People will say you have time to figure it out. You probably do. But don’t tell
yourself this for too long. If you wait too long, **something** will not fill the void. **Anything** will. —And you will wake up and you’ll be 40, and miserable. Figure out what you love to do. Do not settle for less.

**THREE:** There’s a debate over who said this. It might have been film producer Samuel Goldwyn: “The harder you work, the luckier you get.”

**FOUR:** Here is something from the Jewish Talmud – I’m not Jewish – but this is good. “Silence is Agreement.” … Stand up for what is right and truthful. Unless you’re Rosa Parks – and then you can sit down.

**FIVE:** Fear. Fear can be inspiring. We don’t tend to think about fear as being inspiring. Everyone says, don’t be afraid. But I say, yes be afraid – at times. Don’t fear fear. A little fear is not such a bad thing. Too much probably is. Fear keeps you from becoming complacent – comfortable and robotic.

**NUMBER SIX:** “... Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never — in nothing, great or small, large or petty — never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense.” —That was Winston Churchill.

**SEVEN:** I used to be a writer at an advertising agency. I came to recognize that the brain was a bank. It was an epiphany for me. I thought, if I as a writer, was going to continuously take withdrawals from my brain – I would have to make deposits to this creative bank: the brain. And so I would spend a great deal of time reading, or looking at art, studying good literature – photography – film — so that I could take those withdrawals. Makes sense right? But it’s bigger than that. It works in life too. Make - more - deposits - than - you - take withdrawals: in your friendships – in your marriage – in your employment. In life. **Because** withdrawals in life are inevitable. No one gets it perfect. We will all screw up. You will make mistakes and hurt people along the way. But if you do it right, you will have far
more deposits than you have withdrawals and so they will forgive easily. Or they should. –Your life is a bank. Make more deposits than you take withdrawals.

**EIGHT:** Don’t judge your happiness by how happy others seem to be. The happiest people I know are those I don’t know very well. I don’t know who said that – it wasn’t me. The happiest people I know are those I don’t know very well. You have no idea what goes on inside the 4 walls of a person. It ain’t always what it looks like.

**NUMBER NINE:** Credit others.

**TEN:** Yogi Berra, the great New York Yankee — who had a way with words — said, “If the world were perfect, it wouldn’t be perfect.” This number 12 is about failure. You will fail. Unavoidable. You will make mistakes. Unavoidable. –And if you’re at all like me, you’re going to remember your failures far more and longer than your successes. The criticisms will dig deeper than the praise. But learn to let go. –What seems disastrous in the moment – will likely not be a year down the road. Or even 6 months. Probably even the next week. Steve Jobs, in a commencement address of his own in 2005, said, “Getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could ever happen to me.” Yet when he was fired it was devastating to him. **Remember:** growth is dependent upon binary opposition. Adversity, setbacks, trials … they are simply life’s resistance. “If the world were perfect, it wouldn’t be perfect.” Pretty simple really. Simple, not simplistic. And by the way, ultimately you’ll be judged by your victories, not your failures.

**ELEVEN:** Secret to success – and I’m serious here – don’t discount this #11: Surround yourself with people who are better than you, smarter than you, and more moral than you. They will make **YOU** better—smarter—more moral.

**TWELVE:** And once you are successful—don’t forget to give back. I greatly admired actor Jack Lemmon – and actually was
fortunate to work with him very briefly – and he had this philosophy: “If you’ve done well in the business you wanted to do well in, it is your obligation to spend a good portion of your time sending the elevator back down.” I like that an awful lot. It’s about being selfless, and being grateful. Send the elevator back down.

THIRTEEN: Repent. Every day. Repent means “to turn.”

FOURTEEN: Yogi Berra again – on why he no longer went to a popular New York restaurant? He said, “Nobody goes there no more—it’s too crowded.” –That has nothing to do with anything, I just like it.

FIFTEEN of sixteen: I said this before, but you’ve already forgotten: “Silence is Agreement.”

FINALLY: NUMBER 16: Remember always what Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl said: “There are only two races. The decent and the indecent.” (Man’s Search For Meaning)

5 minutes and 15 seconds … 16 seconds …

Again, congratulations class of 2014.