Graduate and Guest Remarks
“Building a Future”
2013 Fall Commencement
College of Business and College of Health Professions
December 14, 2013 – 1:30 pm Ceremony
David L. Eisler, president

It is a true honor to stand before you, the class of 2013. Today is a wonderful opportunity for you to reflect on your accomplishments here at Ferris State University. At such a time you need to know that your success is built upon the collective efforts of so many people who care about you and who take great pride in your growth and development.

I want to pause for a moment so we can express our thanks to them. I begin with our faculty, who have served as your teachers, advisors, guides, and mentors. We are truly fortunate to have a faculty who are dedicated to teaching and who care deeply about students. I would ask that our faculty rise so we can express our thanks to them.

I also want to thank our staff, who each contribute in their way for you, our students. In doing so I would note their many contributions to our ceremony, the beautiful decorations here today, and the commencement program which provides information on our University, its programs and today’s ceremony.

Now to the special guests with us today. First I want to recognize your parents. They have planned and sacrificed to help you reach this pinnacle of achievement. Parents please stand.

I would be willing to guess that there are also proud grandparents here. Would you please stand?

For some graduates there are spouses or significant others who have stood by them in both good and tough times and have supported you working toward this day. Would you please stand?

Graduates, some of you also have children, who have had to share their Mom or Dad with books, studying, and homework assignments. I’d ask the children of our graduates to stand.

Finally we have many friends and other relatives of our graduates here. Please stand so we can thank you for being here with us today.

Graduates, in a few moments you’ll be crossing this stage. Two helpful reminders - As you celebrate this achievement take time to thank those who have worked, helped, and supported you. Their sacrifice and love have helped create this moment for you.

Second, a practical, but useful reminder. We’re going to take your picture as you receive your degree, don’t forget to pause as I shake your hand and smile.
There is something truly magical about what we witness here today. For those of us fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work with Ferris students, we experience this magic throughout the academic year. Despite that, we don’t often have the opportunity to take a step back and see what our students have become. Commencement provides an opportunity for us to pause, reflect and celebrate the truly life-changing difference education makes.

Education is about knowledge, curiosity and preparing for the future. It is also the story of personal achievement and how talent, hard work, dedication and sacrifice can create remarkable opportunities for our students to realize their dreams. Each of our graduates today has a story. I wish that I could relate them all, but let me share just one with you.

This graduate began his career in the lending industry, but always wanted to be a golf instructor, although he had not been a competitive golfer in high school. Declining an opportunity to work as a foreclosure manager, he instead spent a summer working on his game in order to pass the Professional Golf Association proficiency test. Here he has concentrated on golf instruction, observing top teachers from across the nation at every opportunity.

At Ferris he established the Professional Golf Management Teaching Academy, headed the “Lessons at Lunch” program, the “Lessons After Work” summer clinics, and organized six seminars for the Professional Golf Management Student Association. He has revised and helped lead the PGM Teaching Boot Camp.

Wanting to work with Mike Shannon, a leading national putting coach, he sent more than 50 emails to him. Finally they connected, and this graduate observed Mike Shannon’s instruction in Michigan and in Minnesota. After 300-400 hours of work, he is now a certified Laser Optics Putting Coach, one of only twelve in the world. As part of this laser putting effort, he has incorporated Google Glass experiments into this work. He is also now a Trackman Level 1 Certified Professional.

This fall they conducted the clinic for our Presidential Invitational, which benefitted the Professional Golf Management program here at Ferris. At Ferris he has taught numerous golf lessons, including working with Provost Fritz Erickson. With PGM colleagues he designed and presented a clinic for the Michigan Golf Amputee Association. He is also a certified Special Olympics coach.

This is a person who has experienced significant hardship and adversity in life, but who has relentlessly pursued his dream of a career as a golf instructor. Upon graduation he will begin work as a golf instructor at Vision 54, in Scottsdale, Arizona. Vision 54 emphasizes an integrated approach to golf instruction that has worked with many top professionals, targeting the complete golfer – the whole person. He was selected for this position directly out of college, chosen over a field of more than 20 experienced golf professionals who applied.
On this graduation day he wants to recognize his mother, Angela Theut, and sister, Ashley Theut, for their help and support. I would ask **Zachary Theut** stand and be recognized. I would ask that his family also stand.

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 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 this wonderful example of Zach Theut and his determination to excel.

Congratulations and best wishes, class of 2013.