Triumphing Over Adversity
College of Health Professions
May 9, 2014 – 3:30 p.m
David L. Eisler, President

For every student who crosses our stage today there is a story, a story that includes parents, family and friends who supported them, teachers on all levels who educated, challenged, and prepared them. And, of course, there are the students themselves and their personal commitment, effort and sacrifice, which brought them here today.

In the successes, triumphs, and achievements of these graduates we see our hopes and dreams for the future, a future that is bright and promising and filled with opportunities that are yet to be discovered.

Over the past few weeks I have taken time to visit with our graduates, learning about their experiences and hearing their stories. As I listened, I gained an even deeper appreciation of the students we have at Ferris State University and the power of the educational experience we provide.

For many of our graduates, there have been significant challenges along the way. Life often provides unexpected obstacles making us push on against adversity. I’m hopeful you can relate to the experiences of one of our graduates here today who truly has triumphed in this way. This graduate is receiving her diploma thanks both to her individual perseverance, as well as the support she received from faculty and classmates.

For any student, especially one who was a member of the our women’s basketball team, finding out right before the season starts that you have a torn ACL would be bad news enough to cause you to lose focus on your academics. However, in November of 2012, this graduate also found out that her mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Last summer, this graduate returned to her home town of Royal Center, Indiana, to help her mother and accompany her to medical appointments. Although her mother’s health was declining at the end of the summer, this graduate made the difficult decision to return to school, planning on travelling back to Indiana to help on weekends.

The Tuesday after Labor Day she received a call that her mother had been taken to the hospital. Assured by her professors that she could catch up on her coursework, this student then went back home. Ultimately, this graduate missed three weeks of classes while caring for her mother who lost her battle with the disease.

She says it was scary coming back to school. She wanted to just stay home, but she pushed herself to return and complete her degree in Dental Hygiene. She graduates today as recipient of the Hamel Award, named in honor of former Dental Hygiene program director Mary Ann Hamel.
Hashimi. This award is given to the one Dental Hygiene graduate who best displays professionalism, dedication, leadership and service.

She credits three sources of strength and inspiration: her Dental Hygiene professors; her fellow students – especially her classmates and members of the women’s basketball team; and her faith. For their support, she particularly thanks her roommate and teammate, Kylie Muntz, who lost her own father to cancer, and also her Dental Hygiene classmate Jenna Pier.

With her today are her father Doug, sister Erica, brothers Matt and Ross, brother-in-law, Mark, nieces Ali and Jaden, and her boyfriend, Cole.

It is a pleasure to present to you a remarkable person, Katy Fox, and I would ask that she stand and be recognized. Would her family also rise?

Graduates, on behalf of our University I wish you great success, meaning and fulfillment. As you receive you diploma today I encourage you to reflect upon the education you have received, and the many, many people who helped you arrive at this moment. As you set out on the next step of your life and career, you will face times of challenge, disappointment and loss. During those times, think of the example that Katy Fox gives of how a determination to succeed can lead you to excel even under difficult conditions.

Congratulations and best wishes, class of 2014!