

The Bumblebee

Institute of Technology Commencement Speech

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When I was first approached to write a commencement speech two things popped into my head

1. Aren't these speeches supposed to be chucked full of advice and knowledge? How am I going to do that when I don't really know what I want to do with my life.
2. Heck, I am in IT! I write technical reports not speeches. Meaning this is bound to be both mumbled and awkward.

So after a minor freak out; I thought to myself I have a couple of options, which is perfect since I can place them all in a matrix, weight them according to previously established criteria, and determine the best option. And this is the point where my CLA roommates rolled their eyes and said "Why don't you just try writing something, without being so technical". Seeing that this is their field of interest, I decided to take their advice.

Now what is I.T.? Well we have our basic science group, we all know who they are those chemistry, mathematics, statistics, and physics students . Who are so much about the theory of their respective fields that it is hard to have a conversation with them without feeling like a complete idiot. We have the geology and geological engineers who basically rock! The civil engineers who live seven stories underground and are very proud of this fact. The biobased products students who I lovingly refer to as the "children of the corn". The aerospace kids who tend to be obsessed with airplanes and wind, and who think they are rocket scientists. The computer scientists who were so kind to hook up my computer freshman year and host the LAN parties! The electrical engineers who seem to be very elusive on campus, hiding somewhere in their 3 and a half inch floppy disk building. The mechanical engineers or the "jack of all trades", whom you will most certainly see out on the weekends having far too much fun. The chemical engineers ,like my older sister, who have egos that tend to not fit through the doorway. And the

biomedical engineers or as I like to call them the social butterflies of the college. Who, let's be honest are a culmination of every engineering and biological science discipline. As you can see we have an extremely diverse group of students graduating today.

And that is about as far as I got "just writing". So, I felt the need to fall back on my weighted matrix system. After all I am in I.T. and naturally know better than my CLA and Carlson roommates. So today, I would like to share a couple of stories with you.

The first story begins with me sitting in my advisors office talking about what I am going to do with my life. Now I don't know about you, but I always dreaded the "life planning meetings", particularly in my senior year. It seems that everyone older than me whom I talk with always has the same advice, "Just find what you love and do that". Well to be completely honest, I have no idea what I love. I mean it is hard enough to find a date for Saturday night, let alone find what you love to do. And then I received some very good advice from a Chemical Engineering professor, so maybe they do have a reason for inflated egos? He told me that finding what you love to do is like dating. You have to go on a lot of dates and meet a lot of people before you find the one you want to spend the rest of your life with. So it is perfectly OK not to know what you want to do. But that is no excuse to be lazy and do nothing. After all, you do need to "date". Try different jobs. Maybe research is your thing, or manufacturing, or law school or medical school, or teaching. Do not be content to sit around reminiscing on how you worked so hard these past four years and now you think all of these opportunities should just appear in front of you. Because honestly, you didn't get to graduation today by sitting on a couch thinking about what could be done. You got to graduation today by doing what should be done. So get up and make something of yourself. In the words of Confucius, "Wherever you go, go with all your heart." So pick something and go with it. Give it everything you have and who knows where the road will lead you. All I know is that life is too short not to be happy. So if something doesn't make you happy then take another path. Just remember to have faith that one day you will find what you love to do!

The second story is one of perseverance. Coming out of high school all of my teachers thought I would never make it in engineering, and actually scoffed at the notion. Entering the Institute of Technology I carried a chip on my shoulder, and wanted to prove everyone wrong. So I worked hard, got involved in clubs, joined the lacrosse team, and at some points fancied myself wonder woman. I went on to have an internship at 3M and St. Jude Medical and became the president of the Biomedical Engineering Society. Now, I know you may be thinking to yourself, well maybe all of these things just came naturally to her. Well let me tell you, they did not. To this day I still have professors telling me that I am no genius, however they do recognize my hard work and motivation to excel. And I wish that for all of you seniors. Know that it is OK if you don't know the answer, and don't be afraid to say so. But make sure you never give up searching for the solution. Always continue to grow and learn not only from textbooks but also from the people and experiences that you surround yourself with. One of my favorite quotes comes from Samuel Johnson, who said, "Great works are not performed by strength but by perseverance." Remember to never give up on one another and more importantly to never give up on yourself. Have faith that you have the skills to make a difference in someone's life. And that is what the Institute of Technology has shown us. All of those equations, textbooks, homeworks, and exams were not purely instruments of torture. They were the building blocks of how we think. When we see a difficult problem we no longer fret, rather we begin to think about how the problem can be solved. I challenge you all to look for the bigger picture, how do your actions affect those around you? How can you make a difference? What problems can you solve? Use the skill set you have developed the past four years to make to world we live in even better. We are the answer to our own problems. We can solve the current economic crisis with innovation and perseverance. We are the solution.

I would like to leave you with a story from Earl Bakken the first manufacturer of the battery operated pacemaker and founder of Medtronic.

"By all reckoning, the bumblebee is aerodynamically unsound and shouldn't be able to fly. Yet, the little bee gets those wings going like a turbo-jet and flies to every plant its chubby little body can land on to collect all the nectar it can hold. Bumblebees are the

most persistent creatures. They don't know they can't fly, so they just keep buzzing around." Now you may be wondering why I am talking about bumblebees but I promise there is a point to this story, which in the words of Mr. Bakken are... "Never give into pessimism. Don't know that you can't fly, and you will soar like an eagle. Don't end up regretting what you did not do because you were too lazy or too frightened to soar. Be a bumblebee! And soar to the heavens. You can do it."

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. And Congratulations class of 2009!