

BACCALAUREATE 2006

Penn Baccalaureate Address by Marc H. Morial, C '80, president and CEO of National Urban League, May 14, 2006.

The Challenge to Change the World

Ron thank you for that generous introduction. And to Dr. Gutmann, to the faculty and the staff, all who make the University of Pennsylvania work, to all of the parents, friends and supporters, and to the 2006 graduates. Let me just say how honored I am to be able to share just a few thoughts with you this afternoon.

I can't help but remember my first semester at the University of Pennsylvania back in fall of 1976. I came to Penn from New Orleans as a little bit of a country boy. And I had never seen snow or really, really bad weather of the sort that you have in Philadelphia's winters. I lived over in the Quad up on the 5th floor. I remember the room number—526 Rodney. It gave me a great view, of the street every morning. And I woke up one morning and it was a blizzard-like snow storm conditions with wind blowing, and I looked down and I saw all these people hunched over with heavy coats on, walking up the hill to get to class, to get to work. And I looked down and I said, "not for me, not today." And I learned how to skip class that day. Got back under the covers and never again did I sign up for any more 8 a.m. classes, I'll have you know, at the University of Pennsylvania.

But today I also want to say to all the moms, 'Happy Mothers' Day' very warmly and ask that we give all the moms another big round of applause. Thank you very much, thank you...to all the moms and the grandmothers, and I thank my mother for sending those care packages here to Penn almost 30 years ago when I was a student here.

Those who graduate from the University of Pennsylvania this year graduate with a great education. Never once in my life have I ever doubted or not treasured the education I got here at Penn and what it did for me. More than just an academic sense, my education at Penn gave me a sense of confidence; that in any place I walked, stood, or had to present I felt the confidence that I was never outside of my element. That's what Penn did for me. Certainly the 2006 graduates, you leave with a powerful brand; the name, 'the University of Pennsylvania.' And everywhere you go, most places you go, it will impress, it will say something about you: the accomplishment of graduating from a great, great University. It will give you great academic success. Penn graduates succeed. To not succeed is a rare, rare exception. It'll give you economic self-sustainability and comfort. And it will give you—whether you choose to be a nurse or a teacher, or an investment banker or a chemist, or a physicist or biologist, an astronaut or a public servant; a great writer, a film critic—success in all likelihood at the top echelons of your professional life. You know that. You can treasure that and you can take heart with that.

But what I also hope is that this Class of 2006, as it enters this brave, this changing, this transforming America, this global marketplace this new world that is before you; as the class of the Internet, of the e-mail, of iPods, of TiVos, of technological advances unforeseen 20 to 25 years ago, that you will remember your obligation, solemn obligation, to put your talent, your ability and your education to work, yes, for yourself; yes, for your family, but also for your community, for this nation, and for the world-at-large. You must work to make your contribution to change the world.

What I am inspired by and what I hope you are inspired by are our parents and our grandparents who made great contributions in the twentieth century.

What did they do in the twentieth century? For one, they ushered in a technological revolution. Television, electricity, automobiles, machinery, airplanes—were all inventions of the twentieth century.

Number two: they stared down and defeated the genocidal hatred of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany when others stood by the side. People in this nation put the manpower, the person power, the people power, the industrial power behind crushing a regime that sought to not only annihilate people but to take over the world. It was a significant contribution to world history.

Thirdly, and very importantly, they made a contribution to civil rights; to changing the racial justice dynamics of this nation in a very important way. Most notably it is seen in the changes in the cities of the South—the Atlanta, the Houston, the Dallas, the New Orleans before Katrina; the Memphis; those cities that have now become centers of economics and commerce. Great changes.

But what for the Class of 2006? What for those that come of age in this new century will be the charge, the challenge to change the world? I have a few thoughts.

One: to focus on the need to eliminate economic inequality and poverty. Once again, what did our parents, and our grandparents and those of the twentieth century do? They virtually eliminated, and significantly reduced poverty amongst older Americans, senior citizens. Social Security, Medicare, private retirement plans—all of these sorts of things have virtually eliminated poverty among senior Americans.

Almost a century ago, in the early part of the twentieth century, if people got old and they didn't have a family member to take them in and care for them, once they were unable to work, physically infirmed, life was very hard and very tough.

What we should do in this century, what the Class of 2006 should do, is commit to eliminate poverty among America's children. Where there have been few, few significant advances in the last 50 years; to commit to close the economic gaps which are challenging not only the working class, not only those who are poor, but challenging the status of those who are stable, middle class Americans. Work to change it; improve education; make a commitment; let it be a cause and a clarion call for the twenty-first century for the graduates of 2006.

Number two: end genocide. Before our very eyes, right here in 2006 genocidal terror is taking place in Darfur. Maybe we ignore it because it is African on African. Maybe we ignore it because it is Muslim on Muslim. But we shouldn't ignore it. The genocide of Adolf Hitler was initially ignored by the world community. It cost many, many people their precious lives. We have a chance. 480,000 people have already died in Darfur. Let our voices rise, let us say that we will not allow massive genocide to occur on our watch beyond what has already come to pass, in our time, in this the twenty-first century.

Third, remember and keep in mind that all power does not emanate from economics, money and politics. Although much power does emanate from economics, money, and politics. But there's also the power of morality, the power of right. Let us not be so cynical in the twenty first century as not to remember the power of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Not a man of riches; not a man of any political office, but a man of morality; a man who taught us right from wrong. To remember the contributions of Ghandi, to remember the contributions of Mandela whose moral authority and whose moral power...to remember the moral authority that the late Pope John Paul II commanded in world affairs because of the power of morality and the power of right.

I have great respect for entertainers like Bono. And Russell Simmons who was involved in the Darfur march down in Washington with many, many others. Americans of great wealth, like Bill Gates, who have made a large and significant commitment to use their wealth in philanthropic means. And he is but one example. There are many.

Whatever your success in life is—if it's economic you can give of your treasure to support those things you believe in and those things that are right. If you don't have great economic largesse you can give of your time and you can give of your talent.

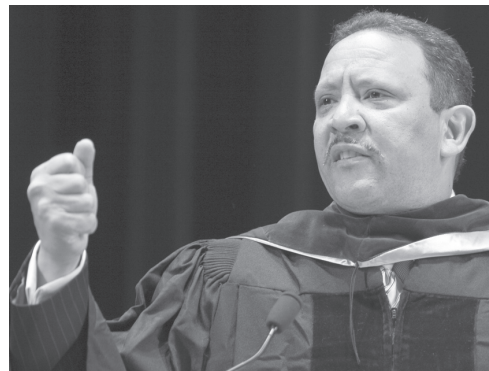
As Dr. Gutmann told us of Mr. Feinberg, a 1991 graduate of this institution who had a great dream, who stayed up all night, who had an idea that many probably thought was kooky, but an idea of creativity and innovation that has changed the lives of others.

And let us recognize, graduates of 2006, that the America you face in 2006 and the century you face, are going to be a century of tremendous transformation. We are a nation that will become more varied and much more diverse, a country that will no longer have a majority ethnic group. It will challenge our leaders. It will challenge our patience. It will challenge our public policy. It will challenge how we can expand democracy and expand the economic power of this nation to so many more people. It will challenge us.

This is the America, this is the world community. This is what you embrace. It is one where you stand on powerful shoulders of those who shaped the twentieth century. But the question is what will be your commitment to change the world.

You leave this great institution with a powerful education. You leave this institution prepared, and you leave this institution ready. Be successful; pursue your dream, but make a commitment to change the world.

Congratulations, Class of 2006. Thank you to the parents and supporters for tolerating, putting up with, supporting all these young people. Let's give them all another big round of applause. Thank you, thank you.



Photograph by Stuart Watson

BACCALAUREATE 2006

Penn Baccalaureate Address by President Amy Gutmann, May 14, 2006.

Turning Setbacks into Success

Parents, families, friends, and colleagues, welcome.

And congratulations to members of the great Class of 2006!

I recently received an interesting email. The subject line read: "Time Travelers, Please Help!!!"

Here's the gist of the email: "If you have the technology to travel physically through time, I need your help. I need to be able to rewind my life—including my age—back to four."

If you can help me I will pay for your trip down here, along with hotel stay, food and all expenses."

I love the next part: "I will pay top dollar for the equipment. Proof must be provided."

Parents and families, you can easily picture your children at four years of age. But imagine how amazed they will leave us all ten years hence.

Consider the story of a Penn international relations major named Mike Feinberg, who graduated from Penn in 1991.

Mike was determined to make a difference right away. After graduation he joined Teach for America, which trains young college graduates to teach in underserved communities. Mike drew a tough teaching assignment: a fifth-grade class in one of the poorest sections of Houston, Texas. He came face-to-face with two daunting obstacles: the barriers poverty erects against learning ... and his own inexperience.

Let's put ourselves in Mike's shoes. Imagine standing before an overcrowded class of youngsters. Many of them went to bed hungry the night before. Many of them can barely read at a third grade level. Some of them are more caught up with their gang rivalries than with their studies.

Mike threw himself into the job. He improved his own skills and struggled to reach his students.

Still, Mike was getting nowhere. Academic performance remained poor. So Mike had a decision to make. Should he move on to a job where the rewards outnumbered the frustrations? Certainly no one would think less of him.

Or, should he hang in there despite the long odds against success?

Mike came up with a third alternative. He and a fellow teacher pulled

an all-nighter to design a new breed of school that could give these kids a better chance to beat the odds. Success would require innovative teaching and disciplinary methods, longer hours, and written agreements among students, parents, and teachers. They called their idea the Knowledge is Power Program, or KIPP.

The Houston school district accepted their proposal to create a KIPP charter school, which became a winner. The kids got turned onto learning. Math and reading scores shot up.

Today Mike Feinberg's KIPP foundation manages more than 40 middle schools and is extending the program to elementary and high schools. Mike even appeared on Oprah last month.

Before you file this story in the "superstar" box, remember: Mike Feinberg faced his share of hard knocks after graduation. Far from setting the world on fire, he was struggling. But he never thought he was failing.

Fired by the "can-do" Penn spirit, Mike persuaded weary school district officials to take a chance on two novice teachers. The same spirit helped Mike acquire the skills he needed to learn from his mistakes, to grow, and to succeed.

Members of the great Class of 2006, the "can-do flame" burns brightly in each of you.

The spark led some of you to design a clean water system for a Honduran village, and others to prepare tax returns at no cost for our West Philadelphia neighbors.

Still others created montages of hula hoops and sequined slippers to probe societal standards of femininity.

Many of you will blaze several trails before choosing a life-long career. Whatever trail you blaze, recognize that your future will depend on your ability to turn setbacks into success.

When you reach a difficult crossroads: Review your options. If you must, pull an all-nighter as Mike Feinberg did. Then make your move, and make a difference.

Congratulations, and Godspeed.

COMMENCEMENT 2006

Penn Commencement Address by President Amy Gutmann, May 15, 2006.

Magical Capacity for Inventiveness

Chairman Riepe, Trustees, honorary degree recipients, honored guests, parents, families, friends, survivors of Senior Week, ... and all returning alumni: It is my great privilege to welcome you to a landmark occasion: the 250th Commencement of the University of Pennsylvania!

Two hundred fifty years ago, our Founder Benjamin Franklin put a charge into Philadelphia, and the Trustees of his College congratulated the graduates of the Class of 1757—all six of them.

How impressed Ben would be to observe this gathering of 6,000 high-voltage men and women who have put the greatest charge ever into his Academy!

Franklin Field is abuzz right now—and we all know the source. Let us all join together in cheering the great graduating Class of 2006!

Graduates, how about a roar of love and gratitude for your parents, families, and partners?

This day marks major turning points in your lives. No more final exams. No more Hey Days. And no more late-night visits to the Greek Lady after Smokes closes!

But make no mistake: Something's coming from your inventive, Penn-educated minds. Something magical. Something that can come only from you.

For inspiration, why not fire your imaginations and join with me in channeling the inventive spirit of ... who else? ... Benjamin Franklin!

Lionized on two continents as a writer, diplomat, publisher, philosopher, scientist, and statesman, Franklin never rested on his laurels. The moment at hand was the thing, his every observation charged with the promise of a transformative discovery.

Inventor of the lightning rod, architect of American independence, conscience of the Constitutional Convention, and the toast of Paris—Franklin resisted conventional wisdom and intellectual complacency, which doused the human spirit.

By the time he died at the age of 84, Franklin had finally grown wise—wise enough to serve as the President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.

But the most remarkable expression of Franklin's wisdom—and the one most fitting for us to consider today—is his inventive spirit, his talent for creating something out of nothing more than the play of his unusual mind.

With magical leaps of imagination, Franklin created new knowledge that transformed the quality of life for his time—and all time.

Today, bifocals. Tomorrow, constitutional democracy.

Franklin's inventive imagination has inspired generations of illustrious Penn graduates, starting with John Morgan, Class of 1757, who would later found America's first medical school—at Penn, naturally.

Franklin's inventive spirit inspired a Philadelphian named Robert G.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller



Allman, who was permanently blinded by a freak accident at the age of 4.

Undaunted, he went to the Overbrook School for the Blind, where he mastered Braille, invented a form of baseball called "groundball," and took up wrestling.

As a Penn undergraduate in the late 1930s, Bob Allman captained the wrestling team, captured the Middle Atlantic AAU wrestling tournament, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

After graduating from Penn Law, Allman

enjoyed a distinguished career as an attorney, a civic activist, and a sportscaster on KYW radio.

Most significantly, Allman was a pioneer who inspired sighted and sightless people alike to lead robust, fully integrated lives. An avid golfer and president of the U.S. Blind Golfers Association, he took special delight in challenging sighted golfers...as long as it was after midnight.

Another exemplar of Franklin's inventive spirit is Connie Duckworth. A Wharton M.B.A. graduate, Connie became managing partner at Goldman Sachs by the age of 40. Like Franklin, she retired from business in her mid 40s to devote herself to changing the world.

Her trip to Afghanistan as a member of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council changed her life—and many lives.

Shocked by the pervasive poverty and illiteracy that afflicted women, Connie sprang into action. She launched an organization that sold Afghan rugs, with the surplus going to the weavers' families—as long as they kept their children in school and enrolled in health and education programs.

Like Franklin, Connie runs her philanthropic enterprise pro bono. The name of her organization is Arzu—the Dari word for hope.

It takes courage to heed the playful call of your imagination and take those first magical leaps forward.

How did Steve Wynn conceive the idea of re-inventing Las Vegas? How did Judith Klinman change the course of bio-chemical research? How did Henry Louis Gates, Jr. make America's African connections come alive for all Americans?

Each of you has the imagination, talent, courage, and heaven knows, the playfulness to become an exemplar of Franklin's inventive spirit. You came to Penn hungry to learn. I have seen you delight in the creative cacophony of perspectives, ideas, and discoveries that our rich diversity produces.

I have rejoiced in the flowering of your inventive genius in our classrooms, laboratories, hubs, galleries, and theaters.

And I know that each and every one of you has the power to solve a problem, create a daring work of art, unlock a mystery of the human mind, break new ground, and improve the world in bold and unpredictable ways—as surely and as unpredictably as did Jodie Foster, Shirley Ann Jackson, and Lawrence Klein.

Cynics may mock my optimism and point to the polarized politics that prevails in our world, and to the global problems of poverty, disease, violence, indeed of genocide and environmental desecration. They insist that nothing will ever change for the better. They know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Graduates, I have already seen you begin to prove the cynics wrong during your time at Penn. You have invented more durable prosthetic hip implants, organized effective anti-hunger campaigns, launched the first national peer-reviewed bioethics journal by undergraduates, and staged innovative and imaginative productions of Shakespeare's plays.

And I know you will not stop now. Your magical capacity for inventive-ness will prevail.

Members of Penn's 250th graduating class: Every challenge you will face can furnish a moment to work the magic of your mind.

The world craves that magic. So please honor Franklin's spirit—and boost our spirits and your own spirits as well—by re-inventing our world one creative step at a time.

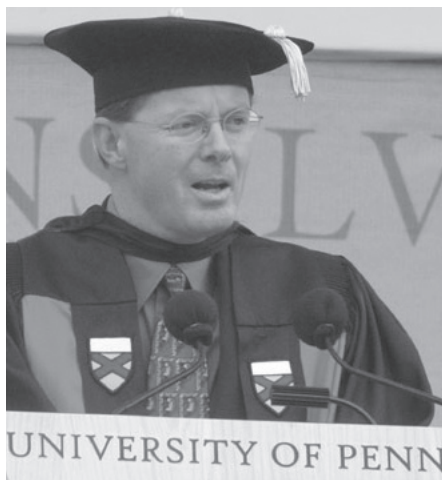
As you go forth, I wish you happiness on your life's journey. May you gain wisdom long before you reach the age of 84. And may the magically inventive spirit of Penn always be with you.

Godspeed!

Penn Commencement Remarks by Dr. Vincent Price, Chair of the Faculty Senate, May 15, 2006.

A Rite of Spring

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller



On behalf of the faculty, I bring you greetings and our congratulations. You receive today a degree from one of this nation's great universities, indeed an institution older than the United States itself and counting among its founders, trustees and graduates nine signers of the Declaration of Independence, including of course Benjamin Franklin, rightly hailed as colonial America's great Renaissance man. No ordinary place, this Penn; and you are no ordinary students.

As a representative of the faculty, I am probably expected to do two things this morning. One is to somehow invoke Franklin, a charge I have just dutifully executed (actually now, twice). The second is to offer words of useful advice, wise counsel on life after graduation; that is, in so many words, to lecture. Here I will defer. We on the faculty have had

our chance, and I suspect you have had your fill. Instead, I will simply express my hope that you drink in all that you can of this day, and consider its significance.

This is of course an occasion for personal reflection, with pride, on the past: a time for memories of this place and its people, our experiences here, and all we've learned together; also memories of our families, friends, and former teachers who brought us to this moment. This is a time not only for pride but for humility, for recognizing that whatever we have made of Penn, we did not make it alone.

Much about this ceremony, from the medieval garb we wear to the processions we make, is a purposeful incantation of the past. And yet we call this a commencement, a beginning. This day, in the end, is not principally about the past. Nor is the university, for all its investment in history, culture, tradition and knowledge, principally about the past. We are instead about drawing the past into the future; about bringing our knowledge, our shared historical experience, and our collective powers of learning to bear on new and ever changing circumstances. The university is about joining the wisdom and experience of age to the enthusiasm and ambition of youth.

Commencement is in this larger sense a powerful rite of spring. We celebrate today the regeneration of humane inquiry in the service of society. We invoke Franklin today because we issue a new generation of scholars, professionals, and citizens, who will, we hope, emulate his lifelong intellectual curiosity, his industriousness, his drive to organize his fellows to face the challenges of his day. This is now your day. And we have every confidence you will rise, Franklin-like, to the occasion.

Thank you, and again, congratulations.

Filling your Life with your Passions

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller



My fellow graduates, I've got the best seat in the house today, a view of the greatest hearts, minds and talents of this generation. You will undoubtedly hear a lot of that kind of talk here today. There are sayings like "the intellectual elite" or "the hope for this country's future" or "the responsibility that comes with the privilege of education." And if you're anything like I was at my Yale graduation in 1984, you'll think, what a load of elitist crap. You'll look around you, at your friends still bleary eyed

and silly from last night's concoctions, the buddies you curl up with, sing stupid songs with, make faces with. These guys? We can't possibly be the ones they're talking about... Do we know where we're going? Hell no! If you're anything like I was you'll spend the next six months in bed watching re-runs feeling like a complete idiot.

But somewhere in the middle of free form post-graduation survival, the journey of your life has a way of sneaking off the starting line. That is when your Penn education starts peeking through. You have been given the promise of meaningfulness. You've learned the discipline to "just do it," to apply yourself and lay your guts on the line. You have been inspired and not just by the things you have learned here. (Let's face it. You won't remember a single test question in a few months.) You have been inspired by the experiences you have had, the people you've held, the blood you have shed, all the growing up surrounded by hopefulness of spirit. You have dared, have stuck your hands in the surf and come up with dripping substance. All of that fine and delicious matter has a way of becoming the material of your life. You pick up bits and pieces of treasure and trash, pain and pleasure, passions and disappointments and you start stuffing them in your bag... your big bag of experience. You do some dumb things that don't work out at all. You stumble excitedly on little gems that you never saw coming. And you stuff them all in your bag. You pursue the things you love and believe in. You cast off the images of yourself that don't fit. And suddenly you look behind you and a pattern emerges. You look in front of you and the path makes sense. There is nothing more beautiful than finding your course as you believe you bob aimlessly in the current. Wouldn't you know that your path was there all along, waiting for you to knock, waiting for you to become. This path does not belong to your parents, your teachers, your leaders, or your lovers. Your path is your character defining itself more and more everyday like a photograph coming into focus, like a color that becomes more vivid in contrast with its surroundings. And who is this shiny penny rolling towards that bright future, our graduating cliché? Is he or she so shiny? Is the future truly bright? Well, that is only for you to know and for you to find out. You are standing on a freeway and things will happen. How you duck, weave and balance, how you push, twist and choose, well, that is up to you.

My freshman Fall in 1980 marked the election of Ronald Reagan for his first term in office and the subsequent 12 years we all know too much about. It was also when HIV/AIDS started to touch our landscape. So much sadness and grief became a part of our lives in that time and the years to come. Like my friends, I protested apartheid in South Africa, the CIA's presence in Central America. I bailed my friends out of jail. I stayed up nights talking, talking, talking, endlessly poring over the ruminations of our consciousness. Finally my graduation procession in 1984 angled through the rainy streets of New Haven, all of the students greeted with smiles and buttons from hundreds of striking and picketing university workers. Col-

lege campuses stung with the excitement of activism. If only I could find that connection to move our country towards change, to serve. But I was never comfortable being front and center with my political opinions. It just wasn't me. It wasn't my way... What was my way? I wanted to be relevant, significant. I wanted my life to be meaningful. All I really loved was to tell stories, to find the hidden truths in the details of people's lives. Well, what difference could that possibly make? I had no idea at the time how much of a difference it can make. Yes, I tell stories and those stories have changed me, have cut me open and spilled me out and connected me with the world around me in ways I could never have imagined. I have learned so much from them. What I have learned lives on in the food I make, in the way I treat my kids, the laws I uphold, the hand I outstretch, the rituals I cling to and pass along. Like the characters I have played, those women who endure terrible adversity and survive intact, victorious, heroic, I want to become better instead of worse, deeper, stronger, more truthful. With every choice I make in my lifetime I come a little closer to that goal. And perhaps in the process other women will be inspired by these portrayals to do the same. This is my way. How could I have possibly known that my freshman year in college?

I'm sure all of you remember your freshman year of 2002. On the anniversary of the worst September in our nation's history we were all glued to those burning buildings, the screaming confusion, the fiery chaos of the 9/11 attacks set against a painful drumbeat for war. And there were the stories. The immigrant window washer working on the Twin Towers that day. How he'd had breakfast that morning with one of those happy grins. "It's gonna be sunny." The pre-schoolers holding hands as they were hurried down Greenwich Street away from the explosions. The teachers would shout, "If you see their parents tell them they're okay." Firemen climbing up, climbing up into the smoke of fear as the world we'd come to believe in crumbled below them. Grief, unending grief, too hard for one nation to bear. And in that one instant of deep sorrowful mourning the world was with us. We reached out our arms as the world reached out its arms. A terrible moment. A moment of wonder. A moment so true and so beautiful and so exquisitely sad, one that we shared with humankind... And then the moment was gone, in my belief, squandered. So many lives lost, for what? And where are we now? Your senior year witnessed the terrible wake of Hurricane Katrina, a mark so devastating on our country that words just cannot describe. (Not just the natural disaster but our leader's equally disastrous and shameful reaction.) How do you live down that mark, a scar that will haunt America and the fabric of its communities for decades to come? No, this country is not better now than it was four years ago. The world is not better now than it was four years ago. That will be part of your story, graduates of the class of 2006. Not your parents' story, not your teachers', your friends', your lovers' or your leaders'. Where will your story take you? How will your experience pave the way for a new voice in America? I hope it will take you out of these doors, out into the open air. You will breathe it in your lungs and say, "From now on this life will be what I stand for, dammit. Move over. This is my story now."

You will find on your diplomas, and my diploma, the motto of the University of Pennsylvania, which in Latin reads: "*Leges sine moribus vanae*." "Laws without morals are useless." I would add that morals without commitment are empty. Your Penn education has given you a two-by-four. You may build a building or hit someone over the head. The choice is yours. How lucky to find you have the option of filling your life with your passions. And no, not everyone does. You have the privilege of creating meaning in your life so that others might also come to enjoy that privilege. Do not waste it trying to become someone you're not. Use it to become who you are already. Class of 2006, I'll leave you with a quote you all know by heart. Feel free to chime in. I'm going to say it twice. From Eminem...

*You better lose yourself in the music, the moment,
You own it. You better never let it go.
One shot! Do not miss your chance to blow.
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime.*

Class of 2006, congratulations and welcome.