

Penn Baccalaureate Address by Sister Mary Scullion, executive director and co-founder of Project HOME (Housing, Opportunities, Medical care, Education), Sunday, May 18, 2008.

Reclaiming Franklin's Deep Commitment to the Common Good

It is truly an honor for me to share this important day with you, the Graduating Class of 2008. It is especially meaningful to be here at the University of Pennsylvania because I have been grateful to experience the commitment, partnership, and friendship of many faculty, students and administrators especially Craig Carnaroli, Maureen Rush, John Kromer, Chaplain Charles Howard, Dr. Ann Matter and Dr. Dennis Culhane, who have put their time, energy, and skills to the cause of justice and equality as well as one of today's graduates, Jennine Miller, who has been a phenomenal and tireless leader at Project HOME; giving voice to those without a home through Vote For Homes and other advocacy initiatives. And I would like to acknowledge two of the Trustees, Robert Fox and David Cohen whose leadership has made a huge difference in Project HOME and in the entire Philadelphia region. And lastly to President Amy Gutmann for her leadership to improve public education, public health, and economic development as well as promote Penn as a leader in sustainable economic growth in this region and beyond.

I have seen how many members of the University of Pennsylvania community have acted out Benjamin Franklin's original vision of what this educational facility could be: a place to empower and equip young Americans with a sense of public service and business, which the colonies, and eventually the new nation would desperately need to fulfill the promises of democracy in this new society founded on the radical premise that all people had fundamental dignity and human rights.

Almost 250 years later, the promise of America is still unfulfilled, but still beckons.

You are beginning a journey that is important, rewarding and complex. It will take you into a world that most often measures the value of a person by his or her productivity alone, while discarding the seemingly unproductive along the way. It is a journey into a society so mesmerized by its view of success that it considers real only that which can be seen and touched and weighed and measured, a society in which human and spiritual values have almost vanished from its consciousness.

As future leaders, you face particular challenges and tough choices. Our society has become largely a culture where even the most lofty professions are often driven by billable hours and well-financed interests. Our legal, financial, political, health and educational systems were established with high ideals: preserving basic democracy and human rights. Yet, largely through the influence of money and power, those ideals degenerate to the point that they are often used to blunt human rights and individual liberties. In the worst cases, these professions are used to promote greater inequities of power and wealth.

The mission of the University of Pennsylvania challenges you to turn the abstract theories that you have learned here into the living, breathing expressions of truth, human dignity and social justice. Your education, your intelligence, your inherent talent should not be sold to the highest bidder and as Virginia Woolf warns, "Do not commit adultery of the brain because it is a much more serious offense than the other." But rather use your gifts for the advancement of humankind.

My experience has convinced me that the men, women and children who sleep on our city streets are a prophetic presence in our midst; they represent a profound symbol to our society, warning us that something has gone radically wrong.

You may remember the old adage about the canary. "The birds were brought into the mines in cages and hung from support beams near the miners. If the canaries began to fall dead from their perches, the miners would evacuate the mine: deadly coal gas was present. This gas was without smell or taste but it could kill and did. The canaries with their high rates of metabolism would fall before the humans. Their death was an accurate prediction of what would happen to the miners if they remained and if the gas was not pumped out of the mine and replaced with good air."

In much the same way, homelessness is symptomatic of an advanced disease within. The men, women, and children who are homeless represent the first wave of the sweeping forces that are drastically changing our society and ultimately threatening the larger social fabric.

We need to realize that what is at stake in our response to homelessness is not just the specific circumstances of people who are homeless. It is no less than the very basic health and vitality of our entire community.

Ultimately, the issues homeless and poor people face are our issues: decent, affordable housing; quality education; employment at a livable wage; a health care system that is accessible to all; healthy communities that nurture healthy families; freedom from discrimination.

When we see a person on the street we can no longer pass by and piously say, "There but for the grace of God go I"—but rather "There go I." As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged us: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Dr. King, speaking at the National Episcopal Cathedral in Washington DC in 1968, in one of his last sermons, offered these reflections on a famous Gospel parable of Lazarus and the rich man: "The rich man didn't go to hell

because he was rich; he didn't realize that his wealth was his opportunity. It was his opportunity to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother Lazarus. The rich man went to hell because he passed by Lazarus every day and he never really saw him. He allowed his brother to become invisible ... He sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty. And this can happen to America, the richest nation in the world—and nothing is wrong with wealth—this is America's opportunity to help bridge the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. The question is whether American will do it. There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will."

Think about the world you want to live in ... the world you want your children and grandchildren to live in ... Is it ok with you that 40% of the teens entering 9th grade this year, will not graduate from high school in four years? Is it ok with you that people are being killed on the streets of Philadelphia in record numbers? Is it ok that our jails are the largest mental health hospitals? Is it ok that 400 to 500 hundred people live on our streets daily and are you ok with the fact that over 1,000 kids are living in city shelters tonight?

The Hebrew Bible was understood as God's revelations of how the human community was to live. It was the vehicle whereby the community could adjudicate conflict, regulate use of resources, resolve inequities, repair harm, and restore relationships. The whole purpose of the Bible was nothing less than to bring about God's vision of justice and shalom for the human community and show us how we could live according to God's will and delight. A particular concern of the Hebrew Bible was to protect widows, orphans, the poor, and any other who did not have power or influence in the community and were subject to exploitation.

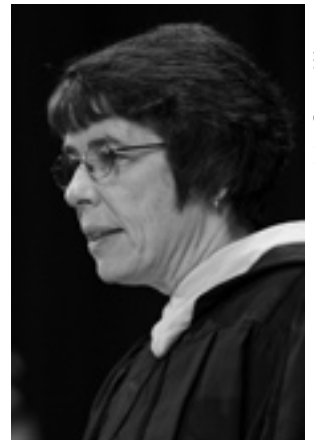
Jesus, contrary to much overly simplistic Christian theology, did not overthrow the law, but pointed to the ultimate purpose of the law, which was mercy, justice and compassion. Like the prophets before him, Jesus showed that the law bore God's special concern for those who were poor, powerless, and socially marginalized. He challenged and condemned those religious authorities who wielded the law for their own aggrandizement and for social control—the very opposite of its purpose.

This past December a woman who worked in Suburban Station lost her job. She lived in a precarious housing situation and shortly after losing her job she became homeless and ended up living on the streets. She lost all of her fingers due to frostbite. After being hospitalized due to frostbite, she left the hospital for the streets in a state of trauma. She sought shelter but all she could find was a place on a couch in a woman's safe haven. Try eating without fingers and doing the most basic self care. What started out as a serious problem of losing one job turned into a nightmare. It is hard to comprehend the suffering and the urgency that homelessness is until it happens to you or to someone you care about. We have to learn to care again about the common good as Benjamin Franklin did so well.

As I said earlier, the promise of what America can be still beckons. Part of that promise is that we become a truly just and compassionate society, where every person is treated with dignity and respect, where every person is valued and has access to affordable housing, quality education and health care, and the chance to use his or her gifts to make a decent living and contribute to society. We are still far from that promise, but like our forebears who refused to give up on this society, who struggled to end slavery, to enfranchise women, to welcome immigrants, to open up economic opportunity, to dignify labor, to extend political participation—we too will not give up. We too will actively work to fulfill America's promise of meaningful opportunity for all. We will insist that part of the promise of America is that we commit to ending the scourge of poverty in this land of plenty. We must reclaim Franklin's deep commitment to the common good, which is at the core of this historic university. As we say at Project HOME, none of us are home until all of us are home. Working to end homelessness and poverty is not an impulse of charity or liberal politics. It is ultimately seeking to heal ourselves and our society as a whole. As Lila Watson, an aboriginal Australian activist says, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Pursue truth, knowledge, justice and compassion. They will take you to new and unexpected places. Trust in God and in a higher power, for our prayer today for you is:

"Glory be to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine." Amen.



Photograph by Stuart Watson

PENN BACCALAUREATE 2008

Penn Baccalaureate Address by President Amy Gutmann, Sunday, May 18, 2008.

Pursuing Ideas Across All Boundaries

Graduates, family, friends, members of the faculty, Sister Mary, and honored guests: Welcome, and congratulations to the great Class of 2008!

Graduates, you and I share a special bond: We arrived at Penn together. When we met at Convocation four years ago, we were “strangers in a Penn land.” Today, we are far from strangers. By living and learning together during these four years at Penn, we have become a family.

In one of the most famous first lines of a great novel, Tolstoy wrote in *Anna Karenina*, “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Tolstoy did not have Penn in his sights, because Penn’s family is unlike any other. We are happy in the most unusual ways:

We have a passion for learning unmatched by any other family. And we are most jubilant when we are turning despair into hope and revolutionary ideas into practical pursuits for the benefit of others.

You certainly shined during some of our nation’s darkest hours. After Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf Coast, you and our Penn family responded with helping hands, opening our doors and your dorm-rooms to displaced college students. You ran blood drives and clothing drives. You organized groups of volunteers to take part in the cleanup.

As weeks dragged into months and months into years, the Gulf Coast fell off the national radar. But our passionate devotion to our brothers and sisters in the Gulf never subsided. We set our hearts and minds to the daunting task of recovery. We brought together the best thinking on disaster response. We held conferences and published new books. We sent teams of faculty, students, and staff from across the University to work on initiatives in housing, redevelopment, public policy, and health care.

Two and a half years later, the Penn family is more involved than ever in helping Gulf Coast communities get back on their feet.

Many members of this class from all four schools have played important roles in

our work. College students have cleaned up and rebuilt homes in New Orleans.

Engineering students have provided technology support in Pearlington, Mississippi, where Nursing students have conducted health screenings. And Wharton students have consulted to local businesses on rebuilding in the towns of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana.

Your stories remind us that our Penn family derives our greatest joy and fortune by drawing on each other’s energies and strengths and deepening our connections to the world.

Befitting our happy and caring Penn family, we also cheer when one of our own translates a revolutionary idea into an invention that puts the human race on stronger footing—as senior Chrysta Irolla has done ... quite literally.

Seeing below-the-knee amputees in China suffering from pressure sores moved Chrysta to expand her horizons beyond understanding the science of prosthetics. She designed a “smart sock,” a sensory device that would protect the skin and allow amputees to walk free of pain.

With support from Weiss Tech House, Chrysta built a prototype of her Proteza Smart Sock, which last month won the Grand Prize at the Annual PennVention competition.

I expect Chrysta to revolutionize the science of prosthetics in the years ahead. I also have come to expect inventiveness from every member of this inspiring class. I have watched you grow into extraordinary young writers, speakers, artists, healers, explorers, entrepreneurs, and—yes—great entertainers.

Tomorrow when we walk together to Franklin Field, know that you will not be breaking away from Penn. Know that you will be adding new branches to our family tree. Know that you will stay connected to your extended family at Penn. Know that you will continue pursuing ideas across all boundaries and innovations that change the world.

Know that we all are, and will continue to be, so very proud of you as the newest members of our most unusual and extraordinarily happy Penn family.

PENN COMMENCEMENT 2008

Penn Commencement Address by President Amy Gutmann, Monday, May 19, 2008.

Changing the Political Climate

Chairman Riepe, Trustees, honorary degree recipients, honored guests, parents, families, friends, all returning alumni: It is my great privilege to welcome you to the 252nd commencement of the University of Pennsylvania!

Please be seated; please join me in congratulating the men and women of the hour: the graduates of the *great* Class of 2008!

Graduates: You have passed your exams, packed up your belongings, and survived Walnut Walk!

And we have every intention of granting you your diplomas.

But first you must prove yourselves worthy of your Penn degrees by performing one last task: you must endure our speeches. If you leave Franklin Field elated, we have done our

jobs. If you leave feeling sedated—well, as Gary Trudeau once observed, that is why commencement speeches were invented in the first place.

Last year, I spoke to our graduates about sustaining our environment for the sake of humanity’s survival. Today, I want to speak to you about changing the political climate for the sake of democracy’s and humanity’s long-term health. Short-term thinking has sold you and our futures short.

Not only are global temperatures rising, polar ice caps melting, and species vanishing; but energy, food, and health costs are soaring, wars are raging, nuclear arsenals growing, and far too many children are dying from hunger, disease, and yes, hatred.

Yet something unprecedented in recent American history is also happening, on this campus and across this country. Yours is the first generation of young adults in over 40 years to have turned on to civic action, tuned into public affairs and turned out to mobilize and vote in huge numbers—and all without the direct threat of a military draft, which mobilized many of my generation.

You transformed the Penn campus into an essential destination for presidential candidates. You set new records for voter registration and voter

turnout in this year’s Pennsylvania primary.

You served communities here at home and abroad in sustainable, replicable ways.

Invite anyone who thinks that today’s young people cannot sustain their engagement to come to Penn and take a long, hard look at the evidence.

Who empowered elderly citizens in West Philadelphia to continue living independently through our nationally acclaimed LIFE program? Students from Penn Nursing.

Who devoted *thousands* of hours of pro-bono work for Philadelphians who cannot afford legal assistance? Our Penn Law students.

Who will you find hopping out of Penn Smiles mobile vans to deliver comprehensive dental care to neighborhood youth? Penn Dental students.

Who have worked alongside their counterparts in Botswana to fight the AIDS pandemic and also delivered life-saving care to thousands of Philadelphians? Students from Penn Medicine.

Who are partnering with Doctors of the World to develop a viable business model for sustainable medical care systems throughout Africa? Wharton Health International volunteers.

Who saved 30,000 homeless pets last year alone through spaying and neutering? Our Penn Vet students.

Working to improve the learning environment in Philadelphia’s public schools are our students from Grad Ed.

On the front lines delivering ever more effective social services for our most vulnerable populations, you will observe students from Social Policy and Practice.

Devising prize-winning plans to revitalize Penn’s Landing along the Delaware River waterfront, you will see students from Penn Design.

And—when it comes to rebuilding Gulf Coast communities that are still struggling to recover from Hurricane Katrina, you will see Penn undergraduates from the College, Engineering, Nursing, and Wharton.

I can cite many more examples of your engagement over the past four years at Penn, but that will do for now, what I can’t stop are the cynics from stamping an early expiration date on your engagement. They predict you and your generation will grow disillusioned and soon become disengaged

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by the inevitable disappointments of democracy.

Only you can prove the cynics wrong.

But it won't be easy.

Whichever candidate wins the next presidential election, he or she alone will not heal all the divisions or resolve all the looming crises. It will require sustained engagement by citizens and politicians working together across partisan divides to solve our greatest problems.

Experimental economist Ernst Fehr has shown, individuals are more likely to devote their time and energy toward achieving a common goal when others are involved.

Sustaining engagement long after today's commencement is not just a matter of doing good; it also serves your enlightened self-interest. You will lead longer, healthier, and yes, happier lives if you get more involved in social groups.

Now, I don't really have to tell Penn students to get involved socially, but my message is that you must sustain your involvement in social groups. Psychologists and sociologists tell us that those who lead lives of quiet isolation typically die before their time. They tell us also that, whatever your age, joining one social group will cut your risk of dying over the next year in half.

I can't vouch for the causal connection, but it's sure worth taking this wager. If you want to keep feeling as blissful as you do today ... and if you want to leave the world better and healthier than it is today—then you need to keep cultivating those social networks that both drive civic progress and

pick you up when life gets you down.

We humans are the only creatures—at least on this planet—whose frontal lobes give us the power, as Dan Gilbert puts it, “to peer deeply into our futures... and learn from mistakes before we make them.” And what we have learned is that, we are so social in nature, that we enhance both our own lives and others best by working together in groups.

Never have so few created so much destruction in so short a time as did the suicide bombers who destroyed the World Trade Center. It is your generation who now knows that never will so many be needed, working together, both here at home and overseas, to restore the damage and move this world forward.

I know we can count on you—as Penn graduates—to make particularly good use of your frontal lobes. The trick is to resist simple but illusory short-term solutions in favor of sustained social activities that encourage long-term thinking, foster enduring happiness, and deliver lasting gains for humanity.

Graduates, you have been the most civically engaged students in Penn's and in this country's recent history. *But* do you have the wisdom, the passion and the persistence to sustain your social engagement after Penn, to gain more happiness, and to move some mountains that block our society's and world's path to a better future?

My bet is ... *yes you do!*

Graduates, go out into the world and prove me right. Persist in your passionate engagement, and the world will be yours to lead and everyone's to love for a long time to come. Congratulations.

Penn Commencement Remarks by Dr. Sherrill Adams, professor of biochemistry, School of Dental Medicine, and Incoming Chair of the Faculty Senate, Monday, May 19, 2008.

Engaging in Service for the Greater Good

It is with great pride and pleasure that I offer all of you congratulations on behalf of the faculty. You have much to celebrate. You are graduating today from an eminent university, founded by Benjamin Franklin over 250 years ago with an unusual vision for that time, a vision of an education that would prepare students for lives of public service, an education that promoted the spirit of free inquiry and learning *in the service of society*. You, the students graduating today from the University of Pennsylvania, embody Franklin's ideals. Yes, you have excelled at academics, but you have also reached out in extraordinary ways in service to others. You have traveled to New Orleans to help the recovery

from Hurricane Katrina. You have registered voters in unprecedented numbers to vote in the Pennsylvania primary. You have gone out into the community to tutor underprivileged students and to provide health care for

those less fortunate than you. You have gone to Botswana as part of Penn's HIV/AIDS partnership. And you have performed cutting-edge research that will contribute to our health and well-being. In short, you are the true legacies of Franklin, engaged at every level in service for the greater good. Because of all of you, Penn is not simply an ivory tower. Because of you, the University is fully engaged in the community, the city, the country and the world. It has been a privilege for us, the faculty, to teach you, to work with you, to learn from you and, yes, to befriend you.

Benjamin Franklin said, “Do not anticipate trouble, or worry about what may not happen. Keep in the sunlight.” He may have been speaking to graduates like you on a day like today, when you celebrate your accomplishments and look to an exciting, but perhaps unknown, future. Some of you may know exactly where your next steps will take you, while for others this may be a time of some uncertainty. Of this I am sure: you all have so much to offer. Be excited about the opportunities ahead, and continue to reach out to others, as you have done during your time with us.

Finally, this is your day. Enjoy it and celebrate with your families, friends and loved ones. May you all keep in the sunlight.

Penn Commencement Address by Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York, Monday, May 19, 2008.

Sharing ‘Four Virtues to Lead By’

Good morning, graduates, faculty, family, friends—Quakers one and all! Mr. Chairman, President, Provost Daniels, thank you for that kind introduction. I've never been compared to Ben Franklin before, but if the wig fits wear it.

In gratitude, I will keep these remarks brief. As big Ben himself wrote, “He that speaks much ... is much mistaken.” And I'll try to make that the last Franklin quote I use. Let me start by saying how honored I am to be here today, and to receive this honorary doctorate degree. My mother always wanted me to become a doctor. And my father, if he were alive today, would never have believed I got any degree.

When I was offered this degree, I asked President Gutmann if I needed to attend some classes here first to sort of get the hang of the place. She told me that she knew I was very busy so not to worry—but I explained I'd be happy to—if she could get me into the course taught by that actor from Harold and Kumar. She may be president, but it turned out, she couldn't get me in.

Still, this really is a dream come true: Who would have thought I'd be standing here in the legendary Franklin Field, where the Eagles used to play, where the movie *Invincible* was filmed, where Howard Cosell once famously got sick during a broadcast of *Monday Night Football* and where the rap star Ludacris recently uttered the immortal words: “It's all piña coladas ... from here to the Bahamas!”

I'm a graduate of Johns Hopkins—a little school not very far to the south of here—but I really feel at home at Penn. First of all—just take a look at the University's four big undergraduate schools. It feels like a grand tour of my life: I went to a liberal arts college—much like Penn's; I majored in engineering—another one of your great schools; I spent decades in the business world—think Wharton; and I've had a lifelong commitment to public health—which is what your nursing school really is all about. So the degree is a perfect fit.

And another thing: where I work in New York, I'm surrounded by Penn alums: two of my deputy mayors, two press secretaries, my legal counsel, and my speechwriter's brother, who is graduating here today.

Now, as you'd expect, I'm completely prepared for this occasion, ready to impart some indispensable words of wisdom—or dispensable ones, depending on your ability to focus after a night of carousing before graduation. But before I do, I want to recognize another special group: the parents and relatives—who are sitting out there this morning, beaming proudly, and they're probably not even thinking about what it cost to get you to this day, or what happens if you don't get a job and have to move back home.

It has been a great year at Penn—I know there's a lot to celebrate. And perhaps the biggest event that we saw on New York television was just last month, when the Democratic presidential juggernaut rolled onto campus. Political rallies, policy discussions on Facebook, Steven Colbert, even a 1-2-3 punch from Hillary, Bill and Chelsea at the Palestra. The University of Pennsylvania in a political sense, really was the place to be. And that's a tremendous tribute to your enthusiasm and activism.

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Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller



Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller



For many of you—this November will be your first time voting in a presidential election. You’ve come of age in a period when no one can ever say, ‘My vote doesn’t matter’—because the election of 2000 proved that every vote counts. Or at least, every vote that didn’t have a hanging chad, but that’s another story.

You’re lucky. You’re getting to participate in what may go down as one of the most important elections in American history, so important that there was a period when some people were encouraging me to get into the race. I have to admit: all the buzz was very exciting—and flattering, if you ever get the chance, do it. The covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, people from Al Gore to Bono visiting City Hall. Here is the most impressive part, I even got a small cameo role in the upcoming *Sex and the City* film. Unfortunately, my scene ended up on the cutting room floor. Turns out they wanted more sex and less city.

But in the end, I decided to stay with my current job—one that has 591 days left before I’m term-limited out—but who’s counting? And instead try to influence the country that my two daughters will inherit by speaking out as a concerned citizen, rather than a candidate.

Now, I’ve been a Democrat, a Republican and now I am an Independent. So I think I can speak for many across the political spectrum. But I’m not here to tell you who to vote for—I don’t even know yet who I’m going to vote for. But I do want to share with you what I heard from the people as I traveled around the country. Over and over, I heard them speak of their desire, a president who will lead from the front, not follow what the pollsters say is politically astute at the moment—wherever they happen to be giving a speech. People want someone who can break the death grip that partisanship has on Washington, who can stand up to the pandering on trade and reject the reckless diplomacy which, together, are destroying our relationships around the world, and one who can mobilize both parties to confront the big, long-term problems they’ve been carefully avoiding—health care, immigration, Social Security, poverty, infrastructure, budget deficits, public education, you name it.

Now, there are some signs that this year’s crop of candidates might do just that. But they’re not going to do that without us pushing them. It’s going to take all of us, together, standing up and demanding more from Congress and from those who would lead our nation, demanding real change—not words, but deeds, and demanding real results—not next year—or after the next election, but now.

It’s not totally an overstatement to say our future is in your hands after you graduate. And rather than tell you how to lead your lives down the road—something you certainly don’t need from me after your excellent education at Penn—let me talk about what I think you should demand from those that want your vote. The candidates often talk about change and making a difference—but what does it really mean? Ben Franklin once compiled a list of ‘13 Virtues to Live By’ but let me take a few minutes to share my ‘4 Virtues to Lead By.’ They’ve served me well in business, in government, and in life.

And I think that if ‘we the people’—a phrase proclaimed just minutes away by horseback from here—challenge the presidential candidates to embrace these four, we can begin to change the culture of Washington and the course of American history.

So here we go: It all begins with the virtue of independence. That’s a word you’re probably used to hearing in this town but it seems to lose its meaning as you travel south on I-95. When you go to Washington now, you can feel a sense of fear in the air—a fear to do anything, or even say anything that might offend the special interests. This is paralyzing our federal government—and causing our leaders to shy away from common sense solutions. For example: Today, this day, 34 Americans will be murdered with guns. And again tomorrow. And the day after. America experiences a Virginia Tech massacre every single day!

The solutions are fairly obvious: since most murderers purchase and possess guns illegally, we need to crack down on the black market for illegal guns. Pretty basic stuff and it has nothing to do with the 2nd Amendment. But try finding a majority in Congress who is willing to stand up and be counted, who’s willing to take on the NRA. Democrats, Republicans, Independents—they’re all terrified! And people die as a result. Children, parents, police officers. You’ve lived through it here in Philadelphia. Every day, innocent people lose their lives because Congress doesn’t have the spine to stand up to the special interests. A little more independence would go a long way toward reducing crime and solving many of our other serious problems. So starting here in Philadelphia, let’s help put independence, and independent leaders, back on the map.

The second ‘virtue to lead by’ is honesty. Ben Franklin said—another quote—I couldn’t help it: ‘What you seem to be ... be really.’ Less spin. More sincerity, or more spine. Here at Penn, you have all been fortunate to be part of an institution that’s always put an emphasis on practical thinking, real-world solutions, and sticking to the facts. Don’t forget that—because there’s no better way to get your point across. And you’ll find that even those who disagree with you will respect you for having the guts to give it to them straight. If only Washington would learn this lesson.

Today, we see people at the highest levels of government manipulating the facts to fit their own agendas—especially when it comes to science. You can see

it at work in the decisions to restrict federal funding for stem cell research, or to refute proven methods that stop the scourge of AIDS here and around the world. It’s a phenomenon I like to call true “political science.” But we should never stifle scientific investigation or ignore the facts for the sake of ideology or short term political gain. That’s not only short-sighted ... it’s completely dishonest. You have a right to your own opinions—but not your own facts. That’s the key difference. There’s a saying I like: ‘In God we trust. All others bring data.’

The third virtue is accountability. Accountability means facing your responsibilities and never passing the buck. Anyone who works in the private sector understands this. But how often do we see accountability in politics? It’s missing from our efforts to improve education, to expand health care, even to confront the urgent challenges of climate change. Cities across the country have been taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become more sustainable. So have universities like Penn—which last month announced that it’s increasing its use of wind energy over the next few years.

But in Washington, just a little bit south of here, there’s no meaningful action, just talk of meeting goals in 2050 or 2070—when none of those legislators will even be alive. I don’t know about them—but we are breathing this air now, drinking our water today, stuck in traffic that’s stalling our economies this year and every day becoming more and more vulnerable to coercion and terrorism from oil-supplying dictatorships around the world that fear our freedoms. It’s easy to announce far-off, distant goals and then expect someone else to figure out how to pay for them and complete them. Do any of you graduates feel like putting off your goals for 30 or 40 years? I didn’t think so. It’s time Washington has the courage to tell the American people that there’s no free lunch—and the time to make difficult choices has arrived. As *New York Times* columnist Tom Frieden said, ‘It’s too late for later.’

And that brings us to the last of my four virtues that make for great leaders, and successful individuals: And that is innovation. Good leadership means having the courage to think outside the box ... and never settling for the same old, tired ways of thinking. As Franklin wrote: ‘Do not fear mistakes—You will know failure.’ I’ve experienced failure, nothing big. Not everything I’ve tried has worked. In 1981, at the age of 39, I was fired from the only full-time job I’d ever had—a job that I loved.

But I have never let myself look back, and the very next day I took a chance and began my own company with the wild and innovative idea of making financial information available to people, right at their desktops. By the way, for the record being kept by those who fired me. It worked out just fine, thank you very much. And make no mistake: I’ll fail again—many times more if I stay active and try to push the envelope by innovating. For America, the key to innovation boils down to one word. You know what it is, it’s immigration.

The word I was thinking of, the key to innovation is immigration. Our nation’s greatest historic strength is that we’ve always welcomed the best and brightest from every corner of the globe. eBay, Google, Levi’s, Budweiser, they were all started by immigrants. That’s the story of New York, and it’s the story of Penn—which has the highest percentage of international students in the Ivy League.

And yet every year, Congress shuts the door to hundreds of thousands of doctors, scientists, engineers, and artists from around the world who want to come here. It’s the greatest case of national self-sabotage and attempted suicide I can imagine. If our country’s future is going to be as great as our past, we have to start realizing that immigrants have always been—and always will be—one of our greatest economic and cultural assets.

And that’s not a bad message to end with today. I have no doubt that the amazingly diverse experiences you’ve had at Penn are going to help you achieve great things. Some of you are going on to graduate school. Some of you are heading into the job market starting tomorrow. That can be scary, especially in this job market. To you, my advice is: find something that teaches, humbles, and exhilarates you. And don’t despair if your career path doesn’t follow a straight line. Plenty of successful people are doing things that are radically different from where they started.

Look around you—that party animal who lived across from you in the Quad could be the next Donald Trump, that sophomore working at Van Pelt, the next Mayor Nutter, that bookish grad student, the next Candice Bergen. There will be ups and downs and sideways. I’ve been hired and fired, lauded and vilified. But each day was a day I looked forward to—even that day in 1981 when I knew I was going to be fired from the job I loved because I’ve always felt that tomorrow will be even better. I have no doubt that, for the great class of ’08 that will be true, too. That tomorrow, you’ll embark on an unforgettable adventure. Tomorrow, with your newfound independence with honesty and accountability, and the spirit of innovation you’ll help build a better world. But today, you’ve earned the right to one last brew at Smokes.

And why not? A great American patriot—whom I’ve actually been compared to recently—supposedly said ‘Beer is living proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.’ And to send you on your way, graduates, there is one more Quaker tradition I’d like to fulfill—especially here at Franklin Field: ‘A-toast-to-dear-old -Penn.’ Congratulations to all of you!