



COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
Thomas C. Barth

President Ayers, Mr. Ipson, Dean Narduzzi, faculty, guests, family, friends and the Class of 2010.

Our dreams and our goals are the forces that keep us driving on in life. They are the true desires of our hearts. Without these dreams and goals we become stagnant in the vast ocean of life. We cease to ride the waves and determine where we are heading, but instead allow the waves of life to arbitrarily push us along, unsure where we are going, and at times we become simply lost.

Before finding a home in the School of Continuing Studies I was one of those who was drifting and lost. Obtaining my college degree had always been one of my goals in life, and there were many times when I could see that goal way off on the horizon, bobbing up and down, challenging me to head straight for it. I would stick my hands in the water and start to paddle towards it, but then my hands would grow tired, my arms would start to burn and not long after that those pesky, yet surprisingly tenacious excuses would start to overcome my better judgment. I can still remember them. You might have fallen prey to a few of them yourself. Some of these excuses were, "you can't go back to school, you have a family, job, responsibilities, other commitments." My favorite one was "you have plenty of time, you're only twenty one!" Little did I understand the expression "time flies" until it was fifteen years later and I still didn't have my degree.

One day as I continued to drift in endless circles I happened to bump into a mysterious object. I reached down into the dark, frigid water, wrapped my hands around it, and pulled towards me. You can imagine my surprise when I realized it was an oar,

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but not just any oar. This oar was engraved with three magical letters, SCS along with an arrow to help show me the way. Thanks to the School of Continuing Studies the sky cleared, the ocean calmed, and finally I was on my way to that elusive goal of obtaining my college degree.

We all had to make the decision to put that oar in the water and push ourselves towards our dreams and goals. The trip has not been easy as we were bashed with one challenge after another. We dug our oar deeper as we tried to navigate our way through the term papers while still caring for a sick child, dealing with absurdly long work weeks, and unwavering responsibilities. We stayed on course even though we were being pushed from all sides by oral presentations, mid-terms, and the dreaded beast of the deep, the final exam. As we continued our quest towards our dream there were many times we looked off into the distance and saw the fading shadows of the missed birthdays, anniversaries, and social events. We could feel the pain of each second as it ticked by, longing for more time to be with our loved ones, but we knew we could not waver from our goal. In our desire to obtain this goal we have lost a little, and sacrificed a lot, but it was not in vain.

On our journey to capture this dream we have been granted a bounty of bliss. Each of the outstanding and extremely knowledgeable professors we have met along the way have graced us with their knowledge, helped to shape and mold us, and always continued to push us when we started to fall behind or simply became complacent. With their help we have been able to experience many different facets of knowledge. We have accompanied many fictitious characters on mystical voyages, traveled back in

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time and stood by world leaders as they made decisions that shaped our world, and even seen how man created the first civilization. We have had the opportunity to understand our impact on the Earth, the intricacies of business, what our morals are, and even how our mind works. We have been hypnotized by the sweet sounds of music, and dazed by the majestic beauty of art.

Along our path we have met an array of amazing people, our peers. Our fellow classmates have motivated us, pushed us, and encouraged us when we started to waver from our goal. We have watched and seen as our classmates started to believe in themselves and seen their confidence grow. We have made many, many friends along our journey. Some of those friendships have become strong and will endure until the end of time. We have shared in a plethora of experiences and emotions. We were all terrified of our first oral presentation. We were all sweating when we received our first final exam. We were all exhausted after writing our first term paper, but as time continued to flow by and our confidence and experience grew, we became excited when we nailed the presentation, proud when we aced the final and exuberant when there was hardly a drop of ink on our returned term papers. We went from being strangers to friends, and on this journey we all became Spiders.

More important we found ourselves and what we are truly made of. Every one of us saw our goal and dream of obtaining our degree on the horizon and we took whatever means necessary to reach out and grab it. Today is a day to celebrate, to beam with pride, and even simply drift in the ocean of life and enjoy the experience, but we must not avert our gaze from the horizon for too long. We still have an abundance of

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dreams and goals hovering off in the distance, impatiently waiting our arrival. We have proven to ourselves and to others that we can weather any storm and endure the struggles and tribulations of any journey no matter how long it takes. As one of Americas greatest writers Mark Twain once said,
“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” Congratulations to the class of 2010!