

State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump
Quincy College Commencement Address

May 19, 2012

Mayor Koch and other colleagues in government, President Tsaffaras, Members of the Board of Governors, distinguished faculty and staff of Quincy College, family and friends of the class of 2012, graduates...I am honored to be here today, and I thank you for your kind invitation to address you.

Growing up in Whitman and living for 20 years in Braintree gave me a close attachment to this city. Since its founding Quincy College has been an important resource to its people and is part of its exciting future.

I have been pleased to see its growth in educational opportunities, its accommodation of students at the start of their careers and in mid-career, its diversity, its commitment to excellence, and its contributions to the economy and community of the South Shore.

This institution has been successful well beyond the dreams of its founders, and it has made possible the careers and well-being of thousands of people. But, as important as it is that we recognize and thank Quincy College today, I want to speak particularly to the graduates.

First, let me say, you make a beautiful sight. Congratulations on a job **well done**. Gaining the privilege of accepting your degree or certificate today required you to make tough choices **every day**.

It meant you had to give up or at least defer other opportunities and goals— like spending time with loved ones; indulging in experiences more pleasurable than lectures, research projects, and exams; or even just getting 8 hours of sleep every night.

You chose well. We all are proud of the commitment you have shown and are thrilled by your achievement.

Remember, though, **your families sacrificed too**. They missed you at soccer games and celebrations. They endured your complaints about the hours you had to spend in the classroom, at the lab, and on the computer. They dried your tears when stress had you on the verge of just chucking the whole thing.

And for many, probably most of you, they sacrificed financially so that you could advance your education and skills. **They too gave up or deferred gratification of their needs and placed you ahead of themselves.**

I doubt there are very many of you who can honestly say, “I did this all on my own.”

So even in this moment of justifiable pride, be humble enough to say, **“family, I couldn’t have done this without you.”** Thank them today. **Bless them today and every day.** And, when they ask you this afternoon to pose for yet another picture....there is only one thing for you to do...smile.

As your achievement shows, there is much you can gain by weighing your options, plotting a course, planning for your future. **But, wow, it can be scary, can't it?** Even as you sit in cap and gown today, **TOMORROW** might be weighing on your mind. I know it was when I graduated.

For **some** people, the 4 most frightening words in the English language are: **“do you love me?”** For me, they were, **“what is your dream?”** I found it paralyzing, not liberating, to think about it.

Dreaming was not a skill that I had been taught by the nuns at St. Bridget's or Cardinal Spellman High School, **and I had never cultivated it independently** - except for when my girlfriends and I would pretend that we each were dating one of the Beatles. (Linda, who was the pretty one in our group, always got to be with Paul. I usually ended up with George.)

Guiding women in their careers was also not a priority at my college. When I entered Boston College in 1973, it had only been admitting women into the School of Arts and Sciences for a couple of years.

The Jesuits had little idea of what to do with us.

So, I would think, **“How do I know what I will like doing? I haven’t done anything yet. What can I do? For heaven’s sake, I am an English major.”** And, if you think I am kidding, or exaggerating for effect, ask my mother.

Yet, here I am. Obviously, somehow, something worked out for me, and much that accounts for my being State Auditor can be summed up in three clichés:

- 1) In all success, there is an element of luck.**
- 2) You learn as much from your failures as you do from your successes.**
- 3) Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

Let me tell you what I mean. First, **in all success, there is an element of luck.**

I got my first full-time job **a year** after I graduated from BC, when I went to work for a State Representative. Going into government is something no one would have predicted for me.

But it happened because one day the woman for whose kids I babysat in high school and whose house I was cleaning when I was in college invited me to get involved in the political campaign of a friend of hers. I was lucky to have been asked, because, not only did we elect Whitman's first female Selectman, but I **got started on the path to the State Auditor's office – just because my friend Leslie said, "why don't you help us on Dorothy's campaign?"**

After another campaign and a State House internship, I got the job of aide to a State Representative. When my boss, Elizabeth Metayer, retired in 1984, I ran to succeed her and represented Braintree for 8 exciting years.

Later, in 2005, I got lucky again. Friends I had made on other Democratic campaigns invited me to help their candidate. Their candidate was Deval Patrick.

When I joined his campaign, I wasn't thinking about returning to government. **By the time the campaign was over, though, I knew that was what I wanted to do.** As luck would have it, Governor Patrick wanted me to join him and appointed me Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development.

After 3 years there, I saw how the State Auditor's office could help make government work better, and I decided to run for this office.

Now, there **were other necessary elements**, like my education, my communication and organizational skills and my command of public policy, but **the 2 fateful steps** in my journey - my entry into government in 1979 and my return to government in 2007 - demonstrate **the role that good fortune can play in your career.**

But, they also demonstrate that you don't have to, and in fact shouldn't, just wait for luck to find you. **You can attract it**, by showing to others a willingness to take on new challenges and responsibilities and to master new skills. So, **don't be afraid to put yourself out there and see what opportunities you can create.**

Now, **the second cliché that has proven true in my life is: You learn as much from your failures as you do from your successes.**

I didn't ascend on a smooth path through my career. It's just as well. Accumulating success upon success can make you complacent. It can discourage introspection and open-mindedness. Sometimes **a good set-back is just what's needed** to encourage you to take stock and set yourself on a higher road. I will give you two examples.

I served four terms in the House, but I had wanted to serve for **five terms**. Instead, I was defeated in the Democratic primary, and, you know, I was a little surprised, since over the course of eight years I

had won four consecutive times, and I thought I had politics all figured out.

What I learned from losing that election is that **in order to succeed, you can't work only with the people you like**. And, I am not referring just to the world of politics.

Whether you work in a hospital, a supermarket, or an office, there are going to be people whose view of and approach to problems differs from yours. But, **if you want to those solve problems, you will have to find ways to work with people with whom you have nothing in common and, even more to the point, with people who actually oppose what you are trying to accomplish.**

(Don't you wish some members of Congress could recognize that and give us more than gridlock on the important issues facing our country?)

I then spent many years as a lawyer in several different settings. One of those jobs was with one of the big financial services companies.

The job required me to be out of state a lot, and I spent a good deal of my time defending the company, even when I was skeptical of some of its actions.

I knew this might be the case when I applied for the job, but I thought that working for this company would be good for my resume, and that the financial rewards would compensate for any downside.

I started the job thinking, “**I will do this** for 5 years.” That shrank to, “**I can do this** for 3 years.” After a year and a half, I called my husband, and said, “I don’t know what I’ll do next, but I’ve had enough of this.”

That experience, that second professional setback, taught me how important it was **for me to find work in my life that enabled me to be true to my values, and to work for more than status and a big bonus.**

The last cliché that has proven true in my life is that **you should always treat others the way you want to be treated by them.** If you want respect, be respectful. If you value honesty, be honest. If you want people to play by the rules, follow them yourself.

Living by this rule, which we are all taught as kids, **establishes you as credible, accountable, reasonable and reliable.** These are highly desirable traits. And, whether you are trying to run a company, organize a Little League raffle, or choose your life partner, you seek out people who try to live up to the standard our parents set for us when we were kids.

I also find the golden rule to be an effective approach to leadership, because it emphasizes helping everyone on the team to be the best they can be. It encourages commitment and the bringing forth of new ideas. This seems to be the approach that President Tsaffaras brings to his leadership, and I think that bodes exceedingly well for Quincy College.

While this may sound naïve, I believe the golden rule to be not just a great foundation for life, but an equally good foundation for all of us in government. And, this brings me to my close.

Barney Frank, who is now retiring from Congress, has said,
“government is the name we give to the things we choose to do together.”

This really resonates with me. It speaks to a reality seated deep in our democracy...it is that **laws that are passed, policies that are implemented, fees and taxes that are collected are supposed to benefit the public good, and they occur only with the consent of the governed.**

I know that when your train is frequently late or dirty, when a headline reveals someone in government to be enriching himself at our expense, **when an agency tries to outlaw school bake sales**, it can make you cynical about government, the decisions it makes, and the people in it.

But I hope you still share my regard for and commitment to our democracy. I want you to be engaged in it, and I want you to choose to invest in our communities and in our neighbors.

So, it's my job to see that government meets your needs and lives up to your expectations. I see myself as a steward of public resources, with a **mission** to ensure that **every dollar given to state government is a dollar well spent**, and that government agencies and contractors **follow the rules** when spending public funds.

That is how I found that I can live out my values and continue the professional journey that began when I joined my friend on that campaign in Whitman.

So, don't worry if today, or even tomorrow, you don't know which doors will open for you or where your feet will take you. **Your demonstrated ability to make good choices, combined with what you learned here at Quincy College, will help you travel farther than you ever imagined.**

I know that President Peter Tsaffaras often remarks that “education is the passport that allows one to travel through and navigate our society.” I wish you all a most wonderful journey.