

Quincy College Commencement Address

January 5, 2013

Wayne Westcott

Mayor Koch, members of the City Council, Representative Chan, members of the School Committee, Chairman Grindlay, members of the Board of Governors, President Tsaffaras, administration, faculty, staff, families, friends, and most importantly, graduates.

Thank you most sincerely for the privilege of being your commencement speaker. I am truly honored to be a faculty member in the Department of Natural and Health Sciences at Quincy College under the excellent leadership of Dean Corina, and I am very enthusiastic about sharing a few thoughts with you on this special graduation day. Please rest assured that my comments will be brief.

First, let me congratulate all graduates on completing one of the most important challenges that you have ever undertaken, namely, earning a college degree in the academic area that you have so thoughtfully selected. In short, you have been successful. It has been said that 90 percent of success is simply *showing up*. However, I definitely do not agree with this analysis. When I enrolled in engineering at Penn State University, a large number of freshmen students *showed up* at the orientation meeting. I distinctly remember the Dean of the College of Engineering telling us to look at the person on our left and the person on our right, because only one of us (one of three) would make it to graduation. He was correct, and I was *not* among the 33 percent of this freshman class who graduated with an engineering degree. More on that later. However, the point is that simply *showing up* is not sufficient to become proficient in your field of

study. As you well know, graduating from Quincy College requires sincere commitment, serious study, and hard work. You deserve high commendation for finishing what you started, and for successfully completing all of your college degree requirements.

Please let me share four recommendations that may be helpful in your future endeavors, academically or professionally. All of these recommendations begin with the letter **R**, to make them easy to remember. The first recommendation is ***Right Decisions***. You will undoubtedly be faced with many career-related decisions during the next several months and years. My advice is to first consult with one or more of your family, friends, or associates whose experience and expertise can be instructive in your decision-making process. Sometimes, people who know you well have a more objective perspective than you do on what would be your best course of action.

For example, during my freshman year at Penn State, my track coach observed that I was much more enthusiastic about physical activity than I was about engineering. One day, he suggested that I should consider switching my major from engineering to physical education, now known as Exercise Science. Although I have the highest respect for engineers, deep down I knew that this was not the most appropriate career for me. The next day, after receiving my parents' blessing, I changed my academic program of study from engineering to physical education. Seven years later, I was blessed to become a full-time faculty member and assistant track coach at Penn State University. I am most thankful for a coach who told me what I needed to know, and for parents who confirmed the wisdom of his advice. They encouraged me to make the right decision, at the right time, to pursue the right professional career, based on my real interests and abilities. Don't let other people make your decisions for you, but do consider consulting with key individuals, including your former professors at Quincy College, when facing major life choices.

My second recommendation is **Responsibility**. Once you make a decision, accept the responsibility that comes with this new territory. In other words, after you make the right choice, do the right thing. Give your very best effort to every aspect of your new endeavor. Be responsible to yourself, as well as to others, and you will almost always experience reinforcing results.

Although I loved my physical education major program at Penn State, I was very unsettled about doing my student teaching requirement. The terrifying thoughts of a tough master teacher and unruly high school boys caused me put off my student teaching experience until my very last semester. Truth be told, I actually considered dropping out of college to avoid student teaching altogether. Fortunately, I finally found the fortitude to face this fearful phase of my teacher preparation. As anticipated, my master teacher appeared to be a larger than life combination of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Attila the Hun. However, as I did my best to perform my practice teaching and coaching responsibilities, I found this to be far and away the most meaningful and enjoyable experience of my entire college career. By the way, I still keep in touch with that excellent master teacher who seemed so big, strong, and scary when we first met, which brings me to my next recommendation.

My third recommendation is **Relationships**. While **Right Decisions** and **Responsibility** are critically important components of a fulfilling life, **Relationships** are absolutely essential. Based on my observations, men don't typically do as well at relationships as women do. For example, if my wife tells one of her friends that she will call her, she means within a couple of days. If I tell one of my friends that I will call him, I mean within a couple of years. Clearly, it takes time and effort to develop relationships, but as you age you will learn that there are few things in life more meaningful or reinforcing than good relationships. Never let your academic or professional pursuits, as important as they are, take away from your personal relationships. Always put relationships with family and friends first, and even consider doing the same with your professors.

There is no way that our Exercise Science professors will remember what grade each of our students attained on mid-term tests and final exams. But, I guarantee that we will remember each Exercise Science student. We will remember our relationships as teachers and learners. We will remember each student's interest, attitude, and effort in the Exercise Science classes and during the practical training experiences. It will be exactly the same for the Exercise Science program graduates. They will not remember our mid-term tests and final exams. But I guarantee that they will remember us. For better or for worse, they will remember our interest, attitude, and effort as their Exercise Science professors.

We will remember the things that really count: personalities more than papers; life qualities more than lectures. These are the essential characteristics of relationships. As you leave Quincy College, please don't leave your relationships behind. Do your best to keep connected with your close classmates and associates. And as you begin the next chapter of your life, please place a high priority on developing meaningful relationships with those who are traveling on the same road, academically or professionally, as well as those who help you on your way, especially your family. It will definitely make your journey more enjoyable, and your destination more rewarding.

Although my original commencement address ended here, President Tsaffaras graciously invited me to include a few comments on physical fitness. Of course, I am most pleased to do this.

Therefore, my fourth and final recommendation, ***Resistance Exercise***, is intended to help you enjoy a high level of personal health throughout your lifetime. You may be unaware that unless you perform regular resistance exercise, you average a 5-pound reduction in muscle tissue and a 10-percent reduction in bone mass

every decade of your adult life. These closely-related degenerative processes lead to sarcopenia and osteopenia, as well as to a multitude of other serious health problems. Because muscles function as the engines of our bodies, less muscle means fewer calories burned and more calories stored as fat every day. Consider that a pound of untrained muscle uses about 6 calories a day for tissue maintenance, but that a pound of strength trained muscle uses up to 9 calories a day for tissue maintenance. This is a very large difference (50 percent more calories burned every day for every pound of muscle in your body).

A 20-minute session of resistance exercise may use 150 calories during your workout. But your body will use more than 100 extra calories a day for three full days following each strength workout for protein synthesis and muscle development. In other words, just 20 minutes of resistance exercise, twice a week, can burn more than 1000 extra calories every week. This is a *most* efficient means for losing fat, while concurrently building muscle and bone for a stronger musculoskeletal system. President Tsaffaras knows how well regular resistance exercise can work. After one year of training in the Quincy College Exercise Program, he added 12 pounds of muscle. On the other side of the coin, after one year of training in the Quincy College Exercise Program, one of our professors lost 24 pounds of fat.

If you already are the right body weight and look great, consider another important reason to do strength training. Your muscles produce hormone-like substances called myokines that have a positive influence on every tissue, organ, and system in your body. Consequently, strong muscles have a major impact on your personal health, as well as on your physical fitness. So, do your best to set aside 20 minutes, twice a week, to perform a few highly beneficial resistance exercises.

To recap, my four recommendations for a healthy and reinforcing life are: (1) ***Right Decisions***; (2) ***Responsibility***; (3) ***Relationships***; and (4) ***Resistance Exercise***.

Thanks for listening. Congratulations on your well-deserved graduation from Quincy College. May God bless you, and everything that you do.