

5-20-2007

89th Connecticut College Commencement Class President's Address

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Recommended Citation

Bothur, Christopher, "89th Connecticut College Commencement Class President's Address" (2007). *Student Commencement Speeches*. Paper 3.
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CLASS PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Christopher Bothur '07, Class President



Content as submitted. Delivered May 20, 2007.

Good morning Camels! President Higdon, the members of the board of trustees, esteemed faculty, dedicated staff, loving parents and families, friends, and of course Class of 2007! It is a great honor and to be before you today.

I've been recently taking an experimental dance course and my immediate impulse as a small liberal arts college student was to interpretively dance instead of speak before you. Luckily for you all, the powers at be talked me down from the idea and instead I stand before you. . . With much less rhythm than I would have liked. . .

So when I was preparing the actual speech I read the commencement addresses of many famous people. They all had excellent wisdom and knowledge to impart to graduating classes. Somewhere in between the speeches of John F. Kennedy and John Stewart, I humbly realized that I am not the President of the United States, nor am I famous pundit. I am in fact a 21-year-old student and have learned very little of the aforementioned wisdom and knowledge to impart to this graduating class.

However, after asking for some suggestions from class members and drawing on my own experiences as a camel, I have compiled a brief, and wholly non-complete list of things we have learned during our four years. This I can share with you.

We have learned that people you meet during a ridiculous icebreaker on this very field, can you become your best friend.

We've learned that professors are not just the people in the front of the class, but that they are our mentors, and if we're lucky enough, our friends. (Chinese) Thank you, Professor Tian and Professor King. (English) Thank you professor Tian, thank you, professor King.

We've found that our fathers will, in fact, continue to support us though college, even though they swore they wouldn't when they discovered we had co-ed bathrooms.

We found out first hand through the phone calls and e-mails from our parents, what the symptoms of acute ENS or Empty Nest Syndrome are.

We've learned what it is to be satisfied with the work we have put forth, knowing that right as you handed in that quiz, you had it in the bag.

And we've learned what flexibility is when went to pick up that same quiz a week later and after reading the grade on top realized that perhaps organic chemistry isn't the major for us.

We have discovered that as we go through life, a balance must be struck between work and play - that sometimes going to the beach is more important than going to your seminar . . . I'm sorry, Professor Ning.

And we have made major scientific breakthroughs over our four years. I personally was involved with such research. And now I can assure you that on a beautiful afternoon on the green, utilizing your textbooks as a pillow is not an effective study method.

And we've learned humility; like that time when you face-planted during yoga and learned you cannot, in fact, do a handstand (that was embarrassing. . . . Namaste.)

We have learned the importance of respect and the power of negotiation from those times we hid from Campus Safety, or better yet, tried to reason with them.

We have learned what not to do while trying to get work done, and by this I mean Facebook. I'd like to take a moment here, often in a speech the speaker gives a nugget or two of advice, be it "wear sunscreen" or otherwise, my nugget this morning, "lay off the Facebook, it's cool to find out whose dating who and to post incriminating photos of your friends, but I'm pretty sure it's the devil and the whole poking thing is a little creepy."

My second little nugget is. . . . play rugby.

Back to the list.

And we have learned that sending a letter to parents explaining that a quinine pill has been issued to protect their child in the event of nuclear fallout is a pretty surefire way to get a phone call from your mother.

We have found that we can rally behind a cause. This senior class had a 93% participation rate for senior giving, the highest in the history of this college! We also had a pretty stellar participation rate for fishbowl as well.

And we acquired the virtue of self-control and calmness in the face of despair, when, on the night before our 25-page final paper on Chinese banking was due, our computer crashed and we almost, but did not - burn the library to the ground.

We've also discovered what it is to be an international citizen. We have gone abroad to work with street children, assist in pro-bono surgery for those who cannot afford it, research and combat the spread of AIDS, fight against the exploitation of children, and demonstrate for a more equitable world, to name just a few.

And most importantly, we have learned what is to be part of an amazing community. And we have learned what the power of community can be. We came together for a vigil in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy. We have put in thousands of volunteer hours in and around New London. We have raised money to help relieve hardships that are unimaginable to many. And when confronted with the ugly face of hate, we responded with vigor and speed and heartfelt compassion.

From this community we have been taught not what to think, we have been taught how to think. We have been given the ability to adapt to a situation, to roll with the punches, and to interact on and a strong and loving level with others. We have been given the gift of a Connecticut College education.

Yesterday I saw my family, and I saw many loved ones here to support the class of '07. And I realized that this day is not just a special moment for us. This is a special moment for those who have worked so hard and admired and supported us so much to get us where we are. I love you mom, dad, KB, my aunts and uncles, my cousins, all those people who are family to me, and I thank you. We don't get many days like this in our lives.

I was planning on ending this speech with a motivational story about how I had found the Titanic. But it turns out Dr. Ballard is here, and . . .I don't want to steal his thunder. So instead I will leave you with some words of the late Kurt Vonnegut: "I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center. ♦"

Class of '07, it has been an honor and spectacular time. I love you. May all our paths cross again soon.