

Class speaker to class of 2012: "Feel proud of your accomplishments"

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/18646/class-speaker-to-class-of-2012-feel-proud-of-your-accomplishments/>

John Gerber, a history major from Ringle, spoke to his peers during the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's 9 a.m. Commencement ceremony on May 12.

Here is a transcript of his speech:

“Thank you, Chancellor Wells, Provost Earns, faculty, staff and honored guests. Now you have all listened to my introduction, but I feel it necessary to go a little further. I’m probably the only person that wears a blue suit during finals, and I’m a Sagittarius and I enjoy long walks on the beach. Now, let’s get done to business. We graduates are leaving UW Oshkosh today with a piece of paper that has our name on it and some words saying you graduated with “insert major here.” But what does it mean? What did we do that makes this graduation day so great?

“Throughout the years we have had to go through incredible challenges to make it to this wonderful moment. It is here at UW Oshkosh that we have conquered our studies. We have taken step by grueling step to complete the mountains of homework and participation in various subjects. We have sat in the pit classes and dealt with the person snoring next to us, and then the person who is jotting down every single note possible. We have stared at what felt like an endless power point presentation. We have pushed our limits studying all night into the wee hours of morning to take an exam where we fill in tiny little circles on a rectangular white and blue sheet of paper. We have all read book after book to cite sources for a paper and a bibliography. We have walked in the rain sleet and snow to take our seats in the class only to find out that the professor had canceled.

“Even so, with these struggles came the feelings of great accomplishment. We could smile after completing a quality paper. We could relax after giving a solid presentation. We could celebrate of what we had done by receiving good grades on an exam. We can hold our heads high knowing we have bettered our education through these classes. We can now use this information to better ourselves for the future. We now realize the work we have been given by the professors to be worth every bit of time here. What we have gained is not only from our education however, it was also the friendships and life lessons we gained here.

“Oh yes I remember those scary frightening feelings the first weeks of class. I looked around and knew nobody, except for maybe that one person from the floor in the dorms that I had just met. Yet as time passed, friendships grew. Activities, class meetings, study partners and “social gatherings” gave us the opportunity to connect with new people. I wouldn’t have met some of my best friends if I hadn’t gone to college and participated in various clubs. These friends were great to hang out with and they lead us to new and exciting opportunities. For me, it was a friend who suggested I do the USA Summer Camp in Japan. Being an English camp counselor in Japan was one of the best times of my life. I felt like a giant in a foreign land teaching the little kids there. It was somewhat like being Chewbacca living on the planet

Endor.

“But even with these highs there also came unavoidable low points. There was the friend who broke down because of an overwhelming test or low grades. When relationships crumbled and led to the difficulties of break-ups. That moment of hearing about a loved one passing away -- as we fell to our knees and let the tears flow in the presence of those college friends we had gained. These experiences were part of the learning during our college journey.

“We came to college to become educated, but those we have met on the way have become as much, or even more, important than that. The math, art, history, business, politics and technology can lead to great accomplishments in life, without friendships, those academic accomplishment would be empty.

“For me it was on July 7, 2007 when my friends would play a pivotal role in my life. On that day I fell off a four-wheeler and severely injured my head. I would lose half a skull and spend a few weeks in a coma. When I woke up I thought I was 10 years old. This tragic accident may have physically wounded me, but the emotional scars would echo through my friends and family was very dear. In my time at the hospital they sent me tons of cards and poster boards covered in signatures. More visitors came to the hospital than I would have ever expected. My family was there to help in my recovery at home; as were the friends I had gained during my first years of school. Old friends built me back up, and new friends kept me going.

“So, sit back and reflect on the friends you have met on campus -- friends who have helped you reach this UW Oshkosh Commencement. Every one of us here today has a different story of how we got here, what we have gone through, where we have been, what we have seen, yet there is one thing in common amongst us all. Today we graduate!

“So, what does this small piece of paper, and the title of College Graduate mean? It shows that no matter what the highs and lows are, we come back with a power we never had before. We step forward knowing that whatever work we are given, we can complete it. No matter what situation, we now have friends to help us. We can exit UW Oshkosh holding our heads high in this amazing feat as we look forward to the future. We stand ready for the mysteries that lie ahead in our next great adventure, whether we enter the working world or continue our education -- we are ready.

“Feel proud of your accomplishments fellow students, and take heart, this final exam known as life is still going and you are now ready to take that exam and succeed. Remember as you leave today to shake the hands of professors who guided you on this trip, thank your parents and relatives for supporting you, and finally, hug those friends for being there when you needed them.

“Thank you all for letting me speak today, and may your future be a great one.”

Read more about spring 2012 commencement:

- [First-ever doctoral grads make UWO history May 12](#)
- [Eighteen honored with Chancellor's Awards for Excellence](#)