

## Commencement speaker President Reilly: "The future really does lie in your hands"

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/30753/commencement-speaker-president-reilly-the-future-really-does-lie-in-your-hands/>

The following is the text of the full University of Wisconsin Oshkosh commencement address given by UW System President Kevin Reilly:

"Thank you for that kind introduction. It is a privilege to be here to share in this special celebration. That is especially true for me because the faculty at UW Oshkosh have invited me to say a few words to you on their behalf today. Thank you, faculty colleagues, for the opportunity.

"Let me start by congratulating the members of the graduating class of 2013 ... You've done it! You have achieved something that is bestowed upon only a small percentage of the human race. With your brand-spanking-new baccalaureate degrees, you are mighty accomplished – and privileged – people.

"And – not to put any pressure on you – the future really does lie in your hands!

"As an aside, I have always found it interesting that at most graduation ceremonies, the commencement speaker is charged with telling masses of students dressed in more or less identical caps and gowns that individuality may well be the key to their success...

"But don't worry. I won't take too long to give you that or other advice. Instead, I'll take my cue from President Lincoln, who said in the opening line of his Second Inaugural Address: "At this second appearing to take the oath of office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first." I assure you I am fully aware that what Lincoln said in his Gettysburg Address, which turned out not to be true, will be utterly true of my commencement remarks today: "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here." You departing students, especially, will little note, nor long remember what we say here!

"My heartfelt congratulations go out to each and every one of you, nonetheless, as well as to all the family members and others who have waited for this day with *almost* as much anticipation as you.

"Make sure to thank these people profusely for all the support and guidance they have given you over the years to help you get to this moment. After all, you can't imagine the sense of relief they are experiencing. Actually, this might be one of your last soft-touch opportunities to ask for money!

"On this day, as you move your tassels to the other side of your mortarboards, you are gaining a place in the wonderful and dynamic community of University of Wisconsin alumni. You are taking your place among some of the world's most capable and respected citizens.

"I'm here to break it to you, though, that the diploma you're receiving today does not mean you have all

the answers. That was what you were supposed to believe in sophomore year! That isn't part of the deal when you are graduates. But it does mean you are much better equipped to find those answers – or even to find more questions.

"To help you thrive in whatever future lies over the horizon, the dedicated faculty and staff here at UW Oshkosh have worked hard to arm you with the necessary knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to greet each day with confidence – an enlightened readiness for what that future, with all its unknown challenges, might hold.

"In the end, I certainly hope that at the base of what we have provided to you is the knowledge and discrimination to help you recognize what is true and good and beautiful in your lives.

"This brings to mind the story of a hotshot investment banker who was taking a much-needed vacation in a small fishing hamlet somewhere on Lake Michigan...

- *While strolling along the waterfront, this banker came across a fisherman in a small boat. The boat had several large, fresh fish in it. Lake trout, I think.*
- *The banker was impressed by the quality of the fish and asked the fisherman how long it took to catch them. The fisherman replied, "Only a little while." The banker then asked why he didn't stay out longer and catch even more fish?*
- *The fisherman replied that he had enough to support his family's immediate needs.*
- *The banker then asked "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"*
- *The fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take an afternoon nap with my wife, stroll into town each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my friends. I have a full and busy life, sir."*
- *The banker scoffed. "I am an Ivy League MBA, and I could help you. You could spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat, and with the proceeds from that bigger boat you could buy several boats until eventually you would have a whole fleet of fishing boats. You could open your own cannery. You could make millions."*
- *"Millions, sir? Then what?"*
- *To which the investment banker replied, "Why, then you would retire. You could move to a small fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take an afternoon nap with your wife, stroll into town in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your friends."*

"The point is, be ambitious, by all means. Aim high. Chase your dreams. We want you to. And along the way, don't forget to really live, to appreciate the things that matter. Live a life with balance and perspective.

"Graduates, that is my wish for you – that your UW Oshkosh education helps you find a balance and perspective in your life that is uniquely yours, despite the almost identical caps and gowns. And since we began with President Lincoln, let's conclude with him. May you continue to tackle every exciting opportunity ahead of you with daring, confidence, and dedication. I also hope that you do so guided by "the better angels of your nature," as Lincoln called them. I hope that your education here at UW Oshkosh has given those better angels reason and rein to roam across all your ambitions and dreams.

"May your futures be worthy of the best of those dreams. Way to go, graduates!"

Read more:

- [Class speaker to Class of 2013: "You will find your place in the world just as you did at UW Oshkosh"](#)