

Dr. Khalid N. Mumin
Penn State Harrisburg
Spring 2025 Commencement Speech
Saturday, May 10, 2025

Good morning to the class of 2025.

Collectively, let's make some noise and celebrate the moment!!! We are! We are! We are!

Now, let's take a moment to thank the many family members and friends here today, as well as the special people who are not in attendance, who have helped you along this journey to graduation...

Those special people who have supported you... Challenged your thinking... Believed in you when people have counted you out or doubted you....

Those special people who have continued to love you at your best as well as your worse.... Let them know with tremendous applause that you love them!

Graduates you are a talented and special group that in many cases have taken the road not taken to achieve your goals. You are graduating in a time where the constructivist technique of learning, hands on learning or demonstrating learning by your ability to perform is essential for success in this ever-changing society.

Now this commencement or the beginning of the next steps in your journey are about to begin. You must commit with new energy, goals and success.

However, with every pathway to success there will be another set of challenges... another set of opportunities... another set of circumstances that will lead you to change your techniques..., and many opportunities to humble yourself with humility by adjusting your attitude towards how you approach your goals.

Your next phase is going to take grit, determination, expertise, patience, love, perseverance and confidence.

You have proven the ability to complete a journey.... You have learned to deal with the complexities of a struggle.... You have walked the road less traveled and find yourself here looking down the road at the next steps and the next challenge. My advice to all of you is to continue stuffing your toolkit of life with positive images.... Quotes.... Positive People that keep you focused with your eyes on the prize.

No matter how you arrived to this point you are a SUCCESS!

BUT don't be fooled by becoming complacent with your past accomplishments. There is much more work to get done. You can't drive forward looking in the rearview mirror!

You have to have a go to plan in your next steps in life, leadership, workforce, military or education....

Because you are destined to be a success. You are destined to make a positive impact in this ever-changing society. It is your responsibility to have your fingerprints on the design of the future.

I say the aforementioned with great intent...This is extremely personal, as an alumnus of this prestigious university.

The person you see here today was born in poverty—raised by a single mother who was the first in the family to graduate high school and college. I was born in the 1900's...

I was a love child, born out of wedlock, where I lived with my mom on 8th Street and my dad lived on 12th Street. In today's terms, this is called a dysfunctional home life or dysfunctional family.... However, both of my homes had love and support, so I call my family structure nontraditional.

I struggled as a teen. I loved ninth grade so much, I did it twice! I was the epitome of living carpe diem—maximizing the present with little to no thought or attention on preparing for the future.

But after attaching myself to friends and adults who truly loved me and saw a future for me that I could not see, I began to excel in school.

I was a YMCA kid, a Police Athletic League kid, a YWCA kid, a Boys and Girls Club kid.

The support and love I received, helped to build a doggish confidence in my ability compete in academia. I began driving forward and not looking in the rearview mirror. I graduated with the top 5% of my class in high school.

Focusing on the road ahead and not looking in the rearview mirror, I went to a two-year college, graduated with honors and was voted most likely to succeed...

I went on to Shippensburg University, Penn State Harrisburg and the University of Pennsylvania, which led me through my career quickly. I was always the youngest and first at everything and pretty successful.

I was a Vice Principal at age 27, a Principal at 30, Central Office Administrator at 35 and Superintendent of Schools at 37.

And looking at the road ahead, I was selected by Governor Josh Shapiro, as the first Senate confirmed African American Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

When I reflect on this journey, it was that special moment... That epiphany I had at graduation here in this arena, when I walked across the stage in May of 2001, when my mother was battling cancer.

I cried with joy and pain, because this was the first graduation, my mother could not attend, because she was bedridden. My sister and first cousin were in the audience, so I had support at the moment, and I forever thank them.

My life changed on the ride home back to Philadelphia, as I hustled home to celebrate with my mom. The confluence of emotions—joy, pain, emptiness and uncertainty about the future were weighing heavily on my mind.

When I arrived home, my mom was dressed in an elaborate cocktail dress with champagne in hand to celebrate. She noticed my melancholy demeanor and said, GOD has a plan for you.

He has a plan for all of us. Revel in the moment and enjoy the journey Khalid. You are now a Nittany Lion for life, and no one can take that from you!

Your tears will dry.... Your prayers will be answered. Your pain will become fuel for your passion.

Now is the time for you to focus on your future with great intent. In the words of the elegant soul singer Phyliss Hyman, my mom said, when that time comes, “meet me on the moon, and please don’t be late...”

I went through a period of soul searching, reflected on the words I heard her use through her profession as a Director of Nursing when dealing with emergencies... I did it with A.P.I.E., and this I my message to you.

You must Assess, Plan, Implement, Evaluate...
Over and over and over again...

Set your goals. Assess the journey...
Create a plan that is well thought out...
Implement the plan with fidelity...
Evaluate your success, challenges and obstacles
and do it over and over and over again.

Follow me.... When life presents a new challenge I want you to A.P.I.E. over and over and over again!

When that next opportunity is knocking at your door, A.P.I.E. over and over and over again!

When you pay it forward and reach back to help someone on a new path way to success you are going to A.P.I.E. over and over and over again!

Congratulations to all of you class of 2025!
Continue to swim like swans on the lake— where you are graceful and majestic with navigating your course ahead, while paddling feverously to stay afloat....

Continue to drive forward while not looking in the rearview mirror and remember to A.P.I.E. over and over and over again! WE ARE! WE ARE! WE ARE!