

Good Morning.

Chancellor Mason, Trustee Hoffman, Deans, School Directors, Distinguished Faculty, gathered friends and family, and, most importantly, the graduates of this Fall 2018 commencement class: It's a great honor for me to be here today be a part of this momentous occasion.

President, George H.W. Bush who passed away recently said, "Think about every problem, every challenge, we face. The solution to each starts with education." Educational achievement is a wonderful, valuable, but often challenging endeavor. So, today I'd also like to congratulate the parents, spouses, other family members, and friends for your support. I'm certain that many of these graduates couldn't have done it without you. If your graduate is like me, the appreciation for your help will only grow as time goes on. I can never thank my parents enough for the sacrifices they made so that I could earn a Penn State degree.

I'm both proud and excited to speak to you, although I have to admit I wondered: how was it that I was asked to be your keynote speaker? What did it mean to be selected? Was it recognition for accomplishment? A vote of confidence that I could come up with some memorable insights or funny remarks? Frankly, I wondered if I was up to the task especially after a friend warned me, "It's great that you were asked, but being a commencement speaker is kind of like singing the National Anthem at the Super Bowl: unless you're Whitney Houston, no one's going to remember you!" I began to reflect on the graduations that I've attended and

my friend was right: I couldn't remember any of the speakers or what they said. I thought, "This might be harder than I thought."

So, I consulted that great advisor in the sky... well – you know what I mean, THE CLOUD! That's right! I Googled the best commencement speeches on YouTube. There are lots of great ones: Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, Steve Jobs, Ellen DeGeneres, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and even Conan O'Brien to name a few. They were all really good!

Their themes range from "Finding your passion", "Being ready for failure", "Changing the world", or just "Tell the Truth." The speeches were provocative, even inspirational, and often funny besides. As a corporate executive, I've given many speeches and PowerPoint presentations, but these people set a pretty high bar!

In the end, I realized that what I had to do was exactly the same as what worked for me time and time again in my career: take the challenge head on, jump right in, ask for help when I got stuck, and work really hard to make it the best I could.

So, today, while I'm pretty sure that you won't remember me – and that's really OK – my hope is that I can give you a few ideas to think about and use going forward. I'm going to talk about what worked for me in MY career. Hopefully, you'll draw some inspiration from it. If not, I'll give you the link to Oprah's speech a little later.

I earned two degrees from Penn State. When I earned my MBA in December, 1988 - exactly 30 years ago, I was in my late twenties, with about seven year's business experience, and I was more than ready to get on with my post-education life. No more papers to write or exams to take!

What I DIDN'T realize that day was that my education was just beginning. Getting a formal education means that you've mastered subjects that others before you created. You've learned theories, facts, formulas, and histories. Hopefully, you've also learned how to learn, how to understand deeply, how to draw conclusions. That's the real value of education; to learn how to think, to observe, to reason, to challenge, to create, to collaborate, to conclude and to decide. If you can do these things, you have the tools to be successful, not only in your chosen field or profession, but in life!

Getting a great education at Penn State was the foundation upon which I built my life. But being a life-long learner gave me the confidence to take on jobs that I didn't know how to do and that my resume wouldn't necessarily support. Being a life-long learner meant that I gained insights and knowledge from others that made me a more competent and valuable professional. Being a life-long learner allowed me to respond to unexpected things that came my way. It's not an exaggeration to say: being a life-long learner allows you to control your destiny!

Graduates, it's exciting to think about your future, your potential, and the impact you can make. I have learned quite a few things during MY journey which might be helpful as you begin yours. Here are MY three key learnings:

1. Be Healthy

2. Embrace Change

And, 3. Make Connections

The importance of Being Healthy isn't new, although my definition is much broader than the usual one. My definition definitely includes being physically well – exercising, eating right and taking care of your body. It also includes being responsible, living within your means financially, caring about the environment, and engaging in your communities. But lastly, being healthy is also about having goals and living out your dreams. It's about believing in something and standing up for it. It's about being authentic, knowing who you are, what you stand for, and not compromising your values. It's about how you choose to live your life, about a choice to be responsible to yourself and others.

I'll share a quick example from my professional life. Shortly after I was appointed Vice President of HR, I was challenged by the President at the time to make a decision that would violate labor law in one of the states where we operated. When I say "challenged" I mean we were in a room pacing around a conference table arguing back and forth over the right action to take. Even though I was still learning my job as head of HR, I knew the law and knew the right action we had to take as a business. He was quite an imposing man – very commanding &

even intimidating. But, despite his self-assurance, I was certain he didn't know the law. I knew it was MY responsibility to make sure we took the right action. After a very difficult twenty minutes, he conceded and reluctantly approved the action we needed to take. The result negatively impacted the financial outcome for the year. As I left the meeting, I was afraid "I won the battle, but may have lost the war." I thought I might have handled the situation poorly, offending him in the process of our disagreement... I actually thought I might get fired. As it turned out, he held no grudge ... In fact, the very next day he called me and was quite cheerful – like nothing had happened the day before. For me, this was a very important moment; I realized my leadership and my values had been tested. I stood up for what I knew to be right without compromising, no matter the consequences. I continued to work for him for 5 years.

So, understand who you are, don't compromise your values, be authentic... Be healthy!

My second learning has been about the importance of "change" in life. The phrase is overused but still true: "The only certainty in life is change." You will see the world change in front of you in many different ways. We live in a world rapidly changing due to advancing technologies, ideologies, and global demographics. The change you will experience will be global and local, professional and personal, welcomed and expected or uncomfortable and difficult. I can pretty much guarantee you that you will experience all of these types of changes in your life.

Many people fear change because the outcomes are unpredictable. What I've learned is that those of us who commit to being a life-long learner, have the ability to deal with or manage

change – and even create it. I’ve also learned that these changes can be catalysts for reinvention, redefinition, and greater self-awareness. Embrace the changes, look at them as opportunities for growth, using the tools you’ve learned, and work your way through each of them.

I think of my own professional career as a good example of embracing change. I’ve really had 3 different professions: engineering, purchasing and HR. You might ask how did that happen? After a few years in engineering and operations, I was offered a new role in the Human Resources department; in the training organization. I know... those of you graduating with an Engineering degree are probably going – “What were you thinking?” But at that time, believing that a change of function and a broadening of my experience could be useful over the long term, I decided to go for it. **I embraced the change.** Soon I was involved in a broader leadership development role. After several years, I was asked to take charge of a new, business-wide, highly-visible project. I was excited! Again, **I embraced the change**, and called on the connections I had within the Company. (More about connections a bit later.) I completed the project very successfully by the end of year ... only to find out I was then without a job. I was distraught to say the least. There was a lot of organizational churn at that time and I was caught up in it. But within six weeks, due to unpredictable events, I was called back in and promoted to lead all of HR. **Again, I embraced the change.** Five years later I became Chief HR officer as our business went public! TE Connectivity was a global manufacturing and technology company of 80,000 employees worldwide. A very unlikely path for someone who never aspired to the role, but who **embraced change** and created her destiny.

As I look back on it, the learning curve was steep, and there were times when I thought that I might be in over my head! I put in killer hours, I made mistakes, and drew heavily on my network to get things done. But through perseverance, not to mention a little luck along the way, I not only survived, but thrived. So, embrace change in your life, look at it as opportunities for growth and use the “tools” you’ve learned to work your way through each step of the way.

My final “learning” is about the importance of connection. Connection is about relationships, both professional and personal. It’s not about LinkedIn connections, Facebook friends, or Twitter followers. This is about having meaningful relationships built on mutual respect, understanding and trust. Make no mistake, having strong personal and professional relationships require an investment of time, openness, and the willingness to support others. The key to strong relationships is becoming comfortable with your own vulnerability and having empathy for others.

The most valuable part of my learning journey over the last 10 years of my career was learning to be “vulnerable.” I know that sounds strange... or even weak... but, at the start, I naively thought as an executive, I had to have all the answers. I realized that better answers, solutions and results came when I consulted others with different experiences and knowledge. You can learn so much and accomplish more than you ever thought possible if you open up to others and allow yourself to be vulnerable... it allows for important connections to others.

I've also found that really understanding how others think or see the world, putting yourself in their shoes and responding with empathy can lead to being a better friend, citizen, coworker, leader... being a better person. If you do, in addition to developing strong connections, you will develop even deeper relationships with a few key people. When you encounter difficult moments in your life, those few really close individuals will be in your corner providing the support and counsel that you need to grow and learn both professionally or personally. So, don't be afraid to be vulnerable or to show empathy .....

In closing, graduates, I wish you the best as you begin the next chapter in your life's journey... I liken your journey to my recent hiking expedition up the very challenging Mt. Washington in New Hampshire. Like my experience, your journey will be tough at times, with rocky, steep inclines, varying terrain, and dramatically different weather from bottom to the top. Take your time and stop to take in the view from time to time – it's wonderful to see where you've been and where you're headed. But never climb to the top of this 6,288 ft. mountain without being in shape – be healthy, embrace those changes along the way. And make connections - no one should do it alone!

I wish you fulfillment, happiness and great success. Congratulations and Good Luck.