

Commencement Speech

Keep Your Dreams Alive: Never Give Up

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Commencement 2012

Just so tradition isn't completely demolished today, let's get all the silly but truthful clichés that apply to us out of the way. Yay! We made it; this is just the beginning of the rest of our lives. We are not fish out of water anymore; we are now birds leaving the nest that is Marietta College to take flight to a new life; and finally, we are gathered here today because we have reached our goals by following the path less trod. Ok, now that we have the clichés out of the way, let's get serious. Fellow graduates we are gathered here today not only to celebrate but also to say goodbye to our second home. A

home that has defined the blueprints that will help us assume the beginning of our new lives. Welcome President Scott, Provost Perruci, the board of trustees, faculty and staff, loved ones-- and my fellow graduates for the class of 2012.

Our metamorphosis is much like that of an architect. We outline and plan how to handle difficult changes in our everyday lives. The more we learn, experience, and face challenges, the tougher the building of our foundation is. In order to explain the importance of sketching the building of our foundation, let's relate our experiences to those of three famous characters from literature. They, too, developed their blueprints for lasting strength and security. This is a story of the three little pigs. It begins just as it did with us--- with our parents leaving us with an emotional goodbye as well as some

advice. “Whatever you do, do it the best that you can, because that's the way to get along in the world.”

The first piggy represents us during our freshman and sophomore years. We arrived at Marietta College with blueprints already drafted from our childhood experiences through high school. We worried, “Will I be able to make new friends? Will I be able to handle all the homework, or studying for exams and still have time for extracurricular activities?” Reaching for our blueprints, sketching, erasing, and adjusting, we addressed these initial worries and stresses. We joined fraternities, sororities, sports, forensics, theatre, or organizations like Charles Sumner Harrison.

We bought organizers to help arrange our social and personal lives so that we could deal with all that college

entails. The structure was shaky, because we didn't know what to expect; like that first little piggy we took the easy way out, grabbing flimsy materials to build the first shelter. As sophisticated systemized sophomores we had superior college survival skills. Sometimes, however, there lurks a big bad wolf that rattles our walls and cracks our confidences. Just as a blue print begins with initial plans, and solid expectations, events force us to rearrange, reduce, or refine our goals, majors and careers.

Although my mind's picture portrayed me as a CNN anchor, Marietta College helped me realize that my faulty design should be replaced with a clearly focused background in Communication where I can work directly with people other than merely report on their activities. The big bad wolf called "stress" huffed and puffed and blew down our straw

house, but like the strong, independent, pioneers that we are, we showed that we are not quitters. We showed defiance to that dumb wolf and said in our humorous pioneer way, “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin will we quit”! Instead we went back to our desks with a renewed vigor and started erasing, sketching, rethinking, and reworking our blueprints to meet that big bad wolf head on. To do this we acquired new tools, materials, and ideas that we learned at MC. While you’re hard at work, remember Yolanda Adams lyrics “Never give up.”

“Every victory comes in time; work today to change tomorrow. Every step you take, you get closer to your destination. Keep the dream alive; don't let it die. And never give up; don't ever give up on you”.

With redrafted blueprints, our second foundation out of sticks was much stronger than the shaky straw house. As juniors we had grown exponentially; we were more stable in our chosen majors, knew how to study, and understood time management. Yet sometimes, as we all know, everything isn't perfect and neither are we. When life is going well, the big bad wolf likes to reemerge ten times stronger.

We are that big bad wolf, our own worst enemy when we allow our insecurities, doubts, and fears to block the way of achieving our goals. Consequently, that big bad wolf huffed and puffed and blew our house apart! When doubts are your enemy, be defiant; say, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," and return to your blueprints.

Finally, it's senior year and we have survived all the big bad wolves. By pouring the strongest foundation possible at Marietta College we have shown the commitment to meet life head on. We faced the big bad wolves of stress, time, change, and self. Yet we are here and that says we have conquered. That big bad wolf huffed and puffed with all his might and couldn't blow down the bricks of our blue and white foundation.

He has slunk away, his tale between his legs while today we stand or sit triumphantly. Tom Stoppard expresses the hope of the future "every exit is an entry somewhere". As Congressman John Lewis said on this stage in 2008, "Get in the way."

My fellow graduates, though we are taking our exit from Marietta College, remember, it is always an entry to another experience, another opportunity to help others face the wolves of the world. Our education has taught us to study, think, challenge, and change. Like architects we can always go back to our blue prints and rework, erase, sketch and adjust to strengthen our foundation. Be defiant to that next big bad wolf and say “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin will I quit!” Congratulations class of 2012!!!