

# ENMU COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS-13 DECEMBER 2014

## **Go For It! Accelerate Into the Future**

by

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Thank you President Gamble for that very generous and mostly factual introduction. You are so kind and such a fantastic mentor to all of us who aspire to careers housed within the "Office of Constant Complaints and Occasional Commendations". You must be commended for your steadfast dedication to Eastern New Mexico University and its Student Success mission.

As you once told me, "the last guy only asked for a tuba." At that point, I knew our future was bright. It was love at first sight.

Dr. Laurenz, "thank you" for inviting me to speak to the assembled body on this momentous morning. Luckily for both of us, I was negotiating bumper to bumper traffic in Phoenix at the moment of your call back. I ignored your initial call, as noted in email correspondence, as an appeal from an unknown number. From this point forward, I will always observe my "reject unknown calls...they're from debt collectors anyway" principle more closely.

More seriously, ENMU Board of Regents, Academic Deans, and other members of the platform party, faculty and staff colleagues...Thank you for entrusting me with this important message.

Family and friends of the graduates, I am certain that you can join me in paraphrasing my parents, John and Lynn, on this spectacular day..."holy cow"... "it's actually happening honey"...you booked our flight to the Bahamas, correct?

And graduates...most sincere congratulations...today is your day...nobody said it would be easy...but most said it would be fun!!!

And it was fun. And what comes next will be even more exciting. You are entering the "rights, privileges, and responsibilities appertaining thereto" phase of life!

I always thought that in a trillion years I would be asked to provide a commencement address for a graduating class somewhere. It first dawned on me in my COMM 102 class when I was a college freshman three years ago.

I never thought the trillionth year would be 2014. I certainly never believed it would be an ENMU commencement address...they own my personnel file!

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Before I get to my five “points of light”, I want you to know that ENMU is an extremely special place. You should be rightfully proud to have earned a degree from this university. I hope you will share your positive assessment of ENMU with everyone you meet. Wear the school colors, root for the Greyhounds and Zias, proudly hang your diploma in your office, and don’t forget to send Eastern a check annually!

As I was seeking a muse for this “new thought platform”, I immediately turned to one of the greatest motivational speakers of all time...Mr. Matt Foley. Everyone, well many here remember him...“living in a van down by the river.” Mr. Foley was played on Saturday Night Live, circa 1997, by the late, great Chris Farley. (Step aside and flex arms.)

While all of that was schtick, the message was true. “Go for It!” Accelerate into the future.

Right now, you are at your most rested and invigorated. I know it’s hard to believe, but it’s true. Ask the people to the right and left of the aisles. Maintain this level of invigoration and remain idealistic. Invigorated idealism will guide you well throughout your professional life.

The five principles I wish to share with you are:

1. Follow your passion.
2. Grow where you are planted.
3. Conduct your professional life.
4. Give back through service.
5. People are people.

Passion, Growth, Conducting, Service, and, People...these, to me, are central to your future success.

**What is passion, exactly?** I don’t know. I also don’t know how to define charisma. Both involve a reaction to some stimulus. I do know I have witnessed passion and people have told me that I am passionate. So, I suppose passion comes from a steadfast commitment to what you are doing. Hopefully you are steadfastly committed to the profession you have chosen. This is the ideal outcome of an undergraduate and graduate education, but is often elusive.

If you are not steadfastly committed, fake it for a while. See if the passion presents itself at some unknown moment, in some new place, when all of the chips seem to be down.

In the professional world, we call that the “eureka moment”. The day the student understands that, as Henny Youngman put it, “if at first you don’t succeed...so much for skydiving.” That moment will occur if you give it a chance to occur.

For those of you that are already passionate about your chosen field, congratulations you “lucky ducks”. Show your passion to others in your profession by demonstrating your

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commitment from day one. It takes no words. It is all about action, and the aforementioned steadfast commitment.

**I hope that all of our graduates will grow where they are planted.** I also pray that many of you will be planted in New Mexico. From a purely selfish standpoint, my kids...the greatest children in the world, just ask me...deserve the best teachers, doctors, city planners, business owners, elected leaders, and on and on. How is this not a selfish position? Everyone in the arena from New Mexico agrees with me.

New Mexico deserves the best. If you stay put and remain or become passionate you will feel fulfilled and the society will benefit from your contributions.

Lifelong learning is about much more than reading books, research studies, and people that are constantly climbing the proverbial, yet undiscovered, "career-ladder". The ladder-climbers are not well-respected by their professional peers, or anyone else for that matter. The "career-ladder" is a fictitious, mental construct, based on constant often diversionary movement.

Put down roots to blossom. Grow where you are planted!

**Conducting.** I am so tired of seeing bad conducting when people are texting, singing, drinking coffee, and putting on make-up while attempting to conduct their favorite song as they drive. T-H-I-N-K people. Everybody stand. (Go through beginning solar plexis sequence. Quickly teach 2, 3, 4 patterns.)

Next time you're counting off Happy Birthday, please show your level of intellect and the impact of this commencement address by saying simply, "one, two"!

I just illustrated only one of the many conducting roles in society. Serve as the conduit for the passion, energy, and ideas of others. Be a functioning fuse, not a blown one.

Be a conductor in your life. Organize your mind and world. Help transmit your passion for growth to all members of your team, organization, or company.

**Aim to be the consummate professional servant.** Service to your profession will lead to other, likely more important service opportunities. Where do I begin, you might ask?

Start with your email inbox. If someone sends you an email message, respond to it. The sender is not expecting a dissertation in response. "Received. Thank you" is a professional reply. Always remember, your escape hatch is "Received. Thank you." This could be expanded to "Pondering. Thank you."

When people ask you "will you", immediately cast your internal response in "yes" terms. The old adage, "you need to learn to say no" is horrendous professional advice. It is akin to "same

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fecal matter, different day." Who drinks from that coffee cup every morning? Yeah, I hope I don't meet them either.

I cannot put into words the positives that your eventual "yes" answer will have on the world. I do know that constant "no's" will get you, quite appropriately, nowhere.

**People are people.** Simple, right? Not so simple. Especially when you are working with passionate, growth-oriented, servant, conductor people. Translated = caring, Care Bear, human beings.

I suppose when you find yourself surrounded by people like these, you're in the right place. At minimum, you know that everyone cares, passionately, about what they're doing. Always come from the perspective of love for people. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Divergent thinking and constructive disagreement lead to innovation and change.

Remember, people are people!

Before I leave you, a quick conducting quiz. Just kidding. Exams are over!

Passion, Growth, Conducting, Service, and, People

As the Beatles quite correctly stated during their last recording sessions as a quartet...the Abbey Road album sessions of 1969..."and in the end, the love you take, is equal to the love you make."

Dr. Gamble and Regents...please award these graduates their degrees!

Congratulations!

Thank you.