

President Austin, members of the University faculty and administration, thank you for this honorary degree and for the distinction of being your commencement speaker. I promise you brevity and I hope some wisdom.

To all of you here today, let me say that it is a privilege to be where the "Huskies" are. You know that old fantasy game we've all played at one time in our lives. Who would you choose to be if you could come back to life as anyone on the planet? I've been fantasizing about being a "UConn Husky."

It's an honor to be able to extend my congratulations to the NCAA Women's Basketball Champions.

I should tell you that this year I have the great good luck and distinct privilege to be delivering commencement addresses at both UConn and Michigan State, the reigning men's champions. Now, I didn't tell them I wanted to come back as a "Spartan."

It is safe to say that I'm the first NSF Director to hold the distinction of delivering commencement addresses at the institutions of both NCAA basketball champions.

Members of the Class of 2000, your families and friends here to celebrate with you -- doesn't the "Class of 2000" sound great? Congratulations on this important milestone.

I suspect many of you grew up with the wonderful Dr. Seuss books. Do you remember the one titled, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*? It begins:  
Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes.

You can steer yourself

Any direction you choose.

You'll have to reminisce through the rest of the book yourself.

Everyone is proud of you today, but most importantly you must be proud of yourselves. You must have confidence in the path ahead even though it has few road markers, and fewer guarantees.

At commencement time, I am often reminded of an amusing but instructive anecdote:

The father of the late and great composer/conductor, Leonard Bernstein, supposedly disagreed with his son's decision to pursue a career in music. Years later, when Leonard Bernstein's father was asked about this objection, he responded, "well I didn't know he would become Leonard Bernstein."

None of us ever know how far, or how high we can soar. Trusting ourselves and our instincts is the first step and the most important one. It is the signal for others to also believe in us.

All of you have earned advanced degrees - making it through a second or third gate. You have a momentum of purpose. An advanced degree is more than just education. It is a decision to choose a determined path; it is a career direction, a driving interest, and in some cases an absolute passion.

With your degree, a long and arduous task has come to fruition.

Each of you probably has a specific goal - a job you may have already secured or are seeking, a way to use your new skills and knowledge to expand your future choices. This is the task of your personal future and, I might add, a very important one.

Despite all your wise preparations and hard work, life always takes some detours. It might come in losing out on a particular job you covet, or a career path you cannot make happen exactly as you envisioned.

It may sound Pollyanna-like to suggest that what feel like a disappointment is often an opportunity in disguise, but I'll say it anyway. I do have the Dalai Lama to support me. In his list of "Instructions for Life," one of them is especially instructive. It reads, "Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck."

The goal is to view every doorway, even one with a shadow, as an opening to new horizons. And remember that our heroes in life are most frequently those who have overcome obstacles and adversity and made 'lemonade from lemons.'

Your generation is the best educated, most highly skilled in our nation's history. Your knowledge and your degrees represent science, communications, education, psychology, nursing, literature, and more.

Whatever field or discipline is written on your sheepskin, it can be applied to hundreds of diverse endeavors. Your advanced degree makes you versatile and multifaceted.

Today, most people can anticipate four or five job or career changes after graduation. View those changes as a chance to live many lives in a lifetime. Cats aren't the only

beings with nine lives these days. All of your endeavors are footsteps in your personal future.

But what of the larger future? Each of us is part of a more expansive future - the future of our nation, the future of democracy, the future of a free market society, the future of world peace, the future of the planet, and even the future of all humanity.

That may sound daunting and it would be easy to think of all that as someone else's responsibility.

That future, however, rests in your hands. You are the new generation of leaders, although it may not feel like it today. You have the new knowledge and the new skills.

Each generation learns from two diverse streams - from new knowledge and from hard experience.

My generation finally learned the wisdom that wars are not solutions, but that peace is a constant and exhausting process to keep in motion.

My generation came late to the insight of environmental protection after many generations of environmental abuse. By the time of the first Earth Day and of Rachel Carson's slim but earthshaking book, *Silent Spring*, our air, land, water, forests, and oceans had been tainted. Cavalier use of our natural resources combined with ill-informed industrial practices brought the ravages of acid rain, the atmospheric ozone hole, and global warming.

With new understanding, we have been addressing the task of rejuvenating damaged resources while planning a more appropriate future. But remediation is always more difficult and more costly than prevention. Learn from us.

On the other hand, under the tutelage of my generation, vast new discoveries and knowledge brought us many gifts:

- vaccines against tetanus and diphtheria, and other infectious diseases
- antibiotics to fight dreaded bacterial infections,
- new knowledge about prenatal care, nutrition, and food safety that led to lower infant mortality and raised adult life expectancy.

The laser and the transistor brought us the miracles of non-invasive surgery and the first steps into the information age. We saw revolutions in the arts that brought us modern dance, rock music, and even digital music. We are in the infancy of wireless communication and e-commerce, and we're on the threshold of e-literature.

My generation laid the groundwork for the knowledge-economy. Your generation has the opportunity to provide its benefits across all America and around the world. You are

inheriting a future where instant communication has made the world the size of an orange.

In that "world neighborhood," 13 of every 14 people speak a language other than English. India, not China, will soon be the most populous nation on the planet. Global business is a fact of life. And, we have the modern phenomenon of a global and highly mobile workforce comprised of the world's most talented and highly skilled workers. They can routinely relocate to take advantage of the best job opportunities. Information technologies also allow them to stay at home, while they are working abroad from their homes.

The advanced degree you are celebrating today is an entry ticket to that workforce. Your future is bright with many opportunities. To have a clear vision of the larger future before us, we must have both mirrors and windows. Mirrors to see ourselves, and windows to see each other.

In stark contrast to that optimism, there are still persistent and monumental disparities in public health, education, and economic opportunity, as we scan the globe, and even our own nation. Twenty percent of the world's population holds 86 percent of the wealth. Half of the global village lives in poverty. Some of that one-half struggle along in America's hometowns, on small farms, and in our urban corridors.

With mirrors, we reflect on and understand the complexity of our own nation. Windows help us to see the similarities and differences of other nations and cultures.

So, to the Class of 2000, I can say with confidence that *The Future Belongs To you: Both The Opportunities and the Challenges*. We have been your teachers, mentors, and parents, and we feel secure in handing over that responsibility. You who have listened and learned over these many years now have opportunities that are only limited by your imagination. You have challenges that stretch from your own local community to the community of nations. Each challenge presents its own opportunity for you to reach beyond your personal future to humanity's future.

It can be as close as the neighborhood youth group or as distant as a flood ravaged village in Mozambique. We are a "world neighborhood" of 6 billion people, most of whom are poor and yet filled with hope of a better future. Each human being on the planet ultimately influences all our lives, and lives in the conscience of us all.

Perhaps your greatest opportunities are the challenges that lie ahead. The future is yours. My generation is in the hands of your generation. We are secure in that knowledge.

Congratulations to all of you on this day of celebration. Great good luck in the days and decades to come. We look forward to watching you soar. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*