

Andy Robinson, Vice President for Student Affairs, addresses the Class of 2014

Good afternoon President Huot, platform party, distinguished faculty and staff, parents, friends, guests, and of course, graduates.

As a college administrator and as a parent, I have had the occasional pleasure and frequent pain of listening to about forty commencement speeches.

Fortunately, I have actually learned a few important things. Number one, I will try to stop talking before you stop listening. Number two, number one is almost impossible, - - - **but it can be done!** So stick with me for a few minutes, because - number three, I've learned there are only about ten possible things to say to graduates

and because you already know most of them, I'll just remind you of a couple of the most important.

At the top on my list, like the "shout outs" your family saw on the big screen, thank the people who supported you (mom, dad, friends, relatives, your dog).

But don't forget those other people, you know, the faculty or staff member who helped you through a tough time, the employer who let you take some time to study, the coach who helped you deal with a problem. How about the people behind the scenes? This commencement is a great example of a life lesson.

There are the people you can see in Campus Safety Uniforms or yellow marshal's vests, or working the sound. How about the people who set up all these chairs - and need to fold them up again later today?

It takes dozens of people to put on this show, but some of the people **really** behind the scenes, are right behind this platform, Barbara, Pat, Ann, Amy, and others. These people have spent much of the past year preparing this event to honor you. Please join me in saying thank you to them and to all those who have helped along the way! (clap, clap, clap!!!) And isn't that perhaps the most important lesson of all? We need other people - and they need us!

In a recent commencement speech Ellen DeGeneres said, "Find your passion! Make your own path! Don't follow someone else's path - - - unless you're lost in the woods and you see a path. Then you should definitely follow that path."

But that is exactly what other people do for us.

They HELP us find our passion and they help us get there, because we're human and we often lose our way. The truth is, almost all of you will find the right path for you, and it will be a path that others have traveled. You just need to make it your own.

You already know all the other commencement advice right? Serve your community.

Give back to your college. No twerking in the teacher's lounge. Important advice, given from the heart.

One critical thing you need to know reveals what I think is the key to success. You share something in common with all of these folks in caps and gowns. That one quality is **persistence**.

Whether you've earned a bachelor's degree, or a master's or a PhD., whether your parents have helped you emotionally or financially, you have all demonstrated persistence. It is necessary for a successful life. As that famous comedian and President Calvin Coolidge said in one of his more serious moments:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not - nothing is more common than unsuccessful men and women with talent. Genius will not - unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not (sorry) - the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

But if you take the persistence you exhibited in achieving this degree, and combine it with the education you have received. You can be unstoppable!

One of my commencement pet peeves is the old idea (that was probably never true in the first place) that you have lived sheltered lives in college

and are somehow now entering the "REAL WORLD". (That requires air quotes " ".) Baloney! (I hope I'm not ruining anyone's speech, but really??)

Some of the things you have accomplished, both in and out of the classroom are absolutely incredible.

You and your classmates performed about 12,000 hours of community service during this past year alone. You have studied all over the world, helped build houses, raised money for charity, and completed a variety of projects to benefit the City of Keene.

You have won numerous academic awards, journalism awards, and athletic competitions.

Your undergraduate research projects have set you apart from your peers at other schools. You have been active in politics and in pursuit of social justice.

Those of us at Keene State and beyond who know what you have accomplished are incredibly impressed. We are proud to sing your praises!

Most of you have been working and going to school for many years, you have developed relationships, lost loved ones, experienced the sorrow and joy of living life to its fullest.

Who ever really lives life more fully than a college student?? Nobody plays harder, works harder, loves more passionately, or is more completely engaged in life than you have been. Seriously? The "REAL WORLD"? You've been in the "REAL WORLD" - AND YOU KICKED ITS BUTT!!!

Today, please be very, very proud of this accomplishment. I can assure you that you will have few times in life when you can truly celebrate something that YOU, with a little help from the people assembled here, have worked so hard to achieve.

Class of 2014, Keep Calm and Kick on!

THANK YOU !!