

David Moskowitz - Class of 1997



Thank you and good morning.

Before I continue, I respectfully and humbly wish to dedicate these remarks to the memory of Professor Aida Santiago who passed away earlier this semester. Professor Santiago left a lasting impression on those of us who were privileged to know her. God rest her soul.

Chairman of the Board, Members of the Board of Trustees, Members of the Board of Regents, President Frank Macchiarola, Members of the Faculty and Administration, Distinguished Alumni, my fellow graduates, parents, friends, and guests. I am honored to join our entire college community in welcoming you to the 1997 Commencement Exercises.

Although today is certainly one of our proudest moments, it is also one filled with feelings of contradiction. On the one hand, it is the successful completion of our undergraduate careers at St. Francis. And yet, as the word commencement indicates, it is also the beginning of something. And whether it's a first job, a full-time job, the continuation of a previously established career, the entrance into graduate school, or family obligations, the future beckons. Certainly today is a joyous occasion. Our futures are undoubtedly bright yet we're also saddened at leaving St. Francis and the friends we've made here.

I began my studies at St. Francis nearly five years ago. I was a 27-year-old freshman who was quite intimidated by the prospect of being a new college student. This challenge was further compounded by my full-time employment as a Sergeant and eventually a Lieutenant in the New York City Police Department. After finishing work at 7:35 each morning, I came to school. It was a difficult schedule and there were times during my first year when I doubted whether I would succeed.

My feelings of apprehension and self-doubt were gradually replaced with a confidence and a quite resolve as I became acclimated to the St. Francis Community.

The college provided a stimulating, a caring, and a supportive environment. Unlike many other colleges, St. Francis requires that students take a core of philosophy and religion courses. I admit I was originally skeptical about the usefulness of these courses

but I came to appreciate their value as I began critically evaluating the world as a whole, my place in it, and the importance of moral values.

I also learned an important lesson from the other students. I never believed that I would have anything in common with a mostly younger student body. I couldn't have been more wrong.

My respect and appreciation for them rapidly increased as I became more aware of the numerous bonds we had in common.

Everyone, regardless of age, sex, race, or religion shares concerns about their future and dreams of successes yet to come. My experience was further enriched by the cultural diversity of the other students. I also made several friendships along the way that will hopefully last a lifetime.

Perhaps the best way to express the significance of our collective experiences at St. Francis is with an observation by Louisa May Alcott. The celebrated poet once said and I quote that "Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow where they lead." Ms. Alcott was quite right. But I also believe that we are fully capable of realizing our goals and our dreams through dedication, perseverance, and confidence in what we desire and in ourselves.



I believe a college education is about building upon our dreams. We go to college to broaden our understanding, to sharpen our skills, and to acquire knowledge. Thus equipped we are ready to take our place as productive members of society.

It is important at this point to mention the individuals who have guided us on this effort, namely, the distinguished faculty at St. Francis. My professors were always available for personal assistance or even a kind word of encouragement.

During my third semester, I was hospitalized for two weeks with a serious injury. After returning to school, my professors worked selflessly to help me successfully complete the semester.

On a personal note, I want to take a moment to acknowledge several professors who had a profound effect on my college years. First is Doctor Arnold Gussin, the Chairman of the Biology Department. Doctor Gussin has a well-deserved reputation as being the

toughest professor at St. Francis. Even so, he is a warm, caring teacher who is dedicated to educating his students. I will always be indebted to him for instilling in me the confidence in my own abilities that I needed to succeed in college.

I also want to thank Doctor Steven Anolik, the Chairman of the Psychology Department, Doctor Ronald Stevens of the Psychology Department, and Doctor Arnold Sparr of the History Department for their continual assistance, their guidance, their friendship, and mostly for their patience.

Ultimately, of course, the faculty of St. Francis can only serve as our guides. The rest is up to us. Acquiring a college degree in itself takes dedication and perseverance. And this is the most important lesson I learned at St. Francis – a lesson that I share with today's graduates.

It is my privilege to thank my fellow students for what they've given me and each other through their friendship. I've been fortunate to attend college with a remarkably talented and committed group of individuals. Thank you for making all of our experiences at St. Francis so meaningful and enjoyable.

As we leave and go our separate ways, there are two things that I want today's graduates to remember. First, anything is possible if you believe in your dreams. With hard work, anything is within our grasp. Second, remember to always treat your fellow man and woman with the respect and dignity we all seek and deserve.

To my fellow graduates, good luck for a happy, healthy, and prosperous future. Thank you again and God bless.

