Jonathan Palumbo’s 2010 Valedictorian Address

Members of the board of trustees, President Dugan, Members of the faculty, honored guests, fellow graduates, family and friends, good afternoon. St. Francis of Assisi vowed to help the poor and those who were unable to help themselves. Similarly, in the early 1800's the Franciscan brothers established schools for underprivileged people in Ireland. Luckily, in 1858 a group of Franciscan brothers carried that spirit of giving to immigrants and the underprivileged people in America. And to this day the Franciscans continue to give the gift of education to all peoples around the country and the world. In an age where money triumphs ethics, the brothers at St. Francis are truly unique. Unfortunately, one truly unique person, Brother George Larkin, passed away in 2009. May his spirit of good will and giving be passed on to all those who are present here today. I want to thank the Franciscan brothers who continue to serve their community and the students at St. Francis College.

I also want to thank the faculty at St. Francis for providing us an education that will last us a lifetime. Dr. Hirsch, Dr. Lancaster, I thank you for all the help you provide the students in their experimental thesis class. Dr. Anolik, I thank you for your support and encouragement. Dr. Biolsi, I thank you for your dedication to Psi Chi, and your teaching will benefit many students for years to come. Dr. Goodstein, I thank you for your work in Psi Chi and offering advice for any student that needed it. A special thank you to my professor, mentor, and I consider him my friend, Dr. Gielen. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of the Institute. These past two years
working on the project with you has been an unforgettable experience. And thank you to the entire psychology department for making these past four years an enlightening experience.

I also want to thank my family for instilling the power of education in me. My mother helped me focus on school while my father made me a more socially aware person. My sister Elizabeth for her support and my girlfriend Susan for loving me even at times when I was extremely stressed out. To my aunt Elise for guiding me in my decisions about education and career. I thank you all for your love and support. I think I am speaking for my entire graduating class that most of us would not be sitting here today without the love and support from our families. Appreciate your families and what they mean to you because in this unstable time, they are your safe haven. It is up to us fellow graduates to utilize the tools that the college has given us in order to work through these dark times. To quote Albert Einstein, “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”

I sincerely, wish you all the health and happiness that life can offer and to take hold of the opportunity that St. Francis College has given us. Some of you in this room will make a difference in this country, but all of us have to try. It is our moral obligation to do the best we can for others, our family, and our country. Never forget that we are Americans. And as Americans and those who hold our similar beliefs, we have faced the worst that the world has to offer.

2010 is a critical year, not only in our lives, but for others all around the world. Our country, and other countries are struggling economically. War, greed, and poverty are rampant. Everyone has been affected by this great recession, and we do not know when it will end. So it is up to us to end it. Not only the graduating students of St. Francis College, but other graduating students all across this nation. It is up to the future economists, lawyers, doctors, psychologists,
teachers, politicians, and people in every walk of life to come up with the tools to bring our
country back to being the greatest on this planet. We have defeated imperialism, fascism,
communism, and we will defeat greed. We must not succumb to the “me” culture, or appease
those who seek to destroy this nation for their personal monetary gain. To quote Winston
Churchill, “an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.” We must learn
from our past experiences and realize this is not a country of “me” but of “we.” We must learn to
help one another rather than ourselves. We should follow the ideals that St. Francis of Assisi had
laid out before us. It is up to our generation to bring justice for those wronged in this recession,
those whose homes were foreclosed, and lost their livelihood. Margaret Thatcher once said
“Europe will never be like America. Europe is a product of history. America is a product of
philosophy.” I hope that the Franciscan philosophy we learned will help us right the wrongs of
our past. Even though times are difficult I hope that you do not lose your sense of achievement
or optimism, and that no matter what you do after college you hold onto your Franciscan values.
Thank you and good luck to all of the graduates.