

Good afternoon graduates, faculty, parents, family members, friends, and distinguished guests. I am humbled by the opportunity to speak before all of you. To the graduates, I hope that your participation in this ceremony will prompt those of you who have not yet completed your degree requirements to do so. Do not be satisfied to frame the certificate of participation received today and hang it on your office wall in place of a real diploma.

Satisfaction, fulfillment, and planning are the items I would like to talk about with you today. I have prepared a 50 minute power point lecture on the topics. However, since I just found out this facility is not SMART ROOM equipped; today you are going to receive the three minute version.

The first point that I want to make is that you are the most important person in determining the satisfaction and fulfillment you get out of your life. It is no different than your experiences at Cal Poly. The classes you got the most from were the classes into which you put the most. You did not learn only because of a professor and you certainly did not fail to learn only because of a professor. You learned from your own efforts. You will find this to be the case in almost all you attempt in your life. The more effort you put in, the more satisfied you will be with the result and the more fulfilled your life will be.

This does not discount the efforts of others in your life in the past or the future, nor the importance of relationships and service. My own life has been profoundly influenced by my parents and mentors in my educational experiences, one each in high school, college, and graduate school. Your relationships with other people are going to be equally important in your life. Nevertheless, it is how you respond to those influences as an individual that will determine your own fulfillment

The second point is to plan for the future, but remain adaptable to opportunity. I know that most of my best opportunities were things that I did not plan. Yet I had the flexibility to adapt to the opportunity and take advantage of the new path. Do not try to plan too far out in the future. Michael Crichton helped put this in perspective in a January 25, 2005 speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. titled “The Impossibility of Prediction”. He advised us to consider Teddy Roosevelt, a major environmental figure and forward looking person from 1900, predicting life today.

Teddy Roosevelt did not know the definition of, nor had ever heard words like:

airport	jet Stream	liposuction
antibiotic	ecosystem	Step aerobics
antenna	tidal wave	leisure suit
computer	tsunami	leotard
Internet	continental drift	lap dancing
radio	tectonic plate	acronym
television	gorilla	IUD
cell phone	virus	DVD
rollover minutes	heart transplant	MP3
fiber optics	penicillin	SUV
robot	bipolar	HIV
atomic bomb		MRI
nuclear energy		

Congratulations on your accomplishments at Cal Poly and good luck to all of you in the future. Your learning has only begun. Take advantage of the base provided by Cal Poly and remember us as you proceed through your life.

Cal Poly Fall Commencement Speech, December 10, 2005

Walter R. Mark

NRM Department