

Commencement Address, 2004

Keynote Speech by Kate Deater

I want to thank Mr. Appleby and Dr. Rearick for giving me the opportunity to speak to all of you, this evening.

Parents - Your children and I have a unique bond. This class is truly the only one that has survived and thrived under one dean following them for all of their four years of high school. They are a testament to the success of that system – their academic success and our feelings for each other are unprecedented. As you parents know, with a wonderful bond such as that comes responsibility. I have enjoyed the best times and endured the worst times along with you. I have grown professionally and personally along with your children.

I have to thank you parents for letting me share in the excitement and the challenge of making sure that your son or daughter would be here, tonight. I also share in the indigestion, heartburn, high blood pressure, and gray hairs club with you – and I wouldn't trade a minute of it. My own parents are here tonight, and I would like to thank them and my husband for all of the patience and support that have brought me here.

But... I'm really here to talk one last time to the Class of 2004... so here goes...

I'm not sure if you remember... but at the start of school four years ago, you came into the high school and we had our first assembly – I introduced myself and tried to explain how this “dean thing” would work... truly, I had no idea what I was doing – or if it would work... I remember trying to explain that I would be like your mom at school...just don't ask to borrow lunch money from me or ask to use my car. Now that you and I have worked for four years together – I have to say that I feel more like a big sister (partly because I'm not that old), and partly because my mistakes are more new and more similar to yours... and... again, because I'm not that old.

It's important to know that advice is just a way for people to dust-off their own mistakes and make something good come of them. Because the years have given me a lot of experiences, I have some advice for you.

I have to admit that these words are not my own. I have borrowed them from a poet named Max Ehrman, who wrote them in 1927. I heard somewhere that poems are a way to let out in public what's in our hearts... here's a look into mine....

Go calmly amid the noise and haste of the world, and remember the peace you may find in silence.

As often as you can, without compromising your ideals, be on good terms with all people.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they, too have their own story.

Avoid comparing yourself with others – it can be harmful to your spirit. You might become vain and bitter because there will always be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Be yourself. Take kindly the wisdom that the years will give you. Gently surrender the things of youth, and be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And, whether or not it is clear to you, the universe is unfolding as it should.

Be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

With all of its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Strive to be happy.

I want you to know that your decisions and their consequences are now yours... in the words of Austin Powers... “Now you have freedom and responsibility... it's a very cool time!”

I wish you luck and love forever!! Thank you.