

JOURNEYS

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First I want to say, “Way to go Class of 2008, we did it!” Whether you attained your Master’s Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, or Associate’s Degree today, you did it; whether it took you five years, or two, you are all sitting here today, and I want to congratulate you all on that wonderful triumph. In addition to your family and friends, I am proud of your victory and journey here at Rivier.

Can you remember the first time you stepped on the campus of Rivier College as a student? I can remember it as if it were yesterday: it was a sunny and crisp move-in day in the residence halls; I remember being frightened, apprehensive, and excited. Being the first in my family to attend college, I often questioned what I was in for. I did not want to depart my home, town, and family, but my appreciation for an education propelled me to take this first step. However, this did not stop me from being apprehensive. I can also remember my first college class. It was Anatomy and Physiology and as I opened that first college syllabus of my education, packed with fun, I began to wonder how my college journey would unfold.

Today, four years later, I do not want to leave Rivier College, a place I currently call my home. Somewhere during the four years, including summers I spent here, I fell in love with this campus; I admire the community atmosphere, and the brilliant citizens who uphold the community. From the instant I stepped on the campus, I embarked on a journey, a journey to expand my mind, discover myself, and enhance the environment surrounding me. As I am sure the students of the class of 2008 can understand, my journey has been crammed with satisfaction and disappointment; however, I am grateful for the way it turned out, as my journey encompassed countless valuable lessons. In a nutshell, my college experience was a journey of transformation. I went from being a fearful, average, high-school student to someone who developed the reasoning, writing, and healthcare skills that will help me the rest of my life.

With the help of staff, faculty, and friends, I learned to question the world around me, both locally and globally. Today, I earn my Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Nursing with the support and assistance of the professors from the Division of Nursing. In addition to my degree, throughout the four years at Rivier, I earned a gratifying *education* with the training and support from the student affairs professionals and staff through *campus involvement*. From my experience at Rivier, I appreciate that through community service, lives can benefit and that community service is the rent we pay for existing on this earth. In the end, I had the best of both worlds. I gained education, knowledge, and skills both inside and outside the classroom; today, because of the skills and education I received from Rivier, I can proudly say I am a leader. I have the Rivier Community to thank, as this magnificent community helped cultivating me into a leader who has a passion for service and continuing education. It is here that I found my home and myself. I believe that life after Rivier College, for all of us, will be better, if we utilize the critical thinking aptitude and competence we developed here. You all have indispensable skills. Each of you had your own journey here at Rivier. Whether you were a resident, commuter, day or evening student, you engaged in your own particular journey, which only you can delineate. My goal for the class of 2008 is for you all to reflect upon and define your journey. As you emerge in your future careers and life, use the lessons, both big and small, as groundwork to humanizing the current world.

Currently, Class of 2008, the world is in need of your critical thinking skills, attention to detail, and creativity. The world is not as safe as we want it to be: there is war, hardship, and suffering. However, I believe, from the lessons and own personal journeys we have led while at Rivier, we, the class of 2008, can have an impact on our world. Whatever your major was—nursing, biology, criminal justice, human development, business, etc.,—the world is need of your talents. Have you ever seen the movie Pay it Forward?

In this movie, a young boy learns how to make the world a better place; he develops an inspirational concept, which permits him to do a favor, sometime positive, for three different strangers, and, in return, he asks those three people to do the same to three more strangers. This concept is motivating. It took one boy to start a rippling effect, which counteracted negative events. I simply ask that, as graduates from Rivier College, we do the same, but within our future careers. The only way to attack the problems of the world is to start small and within our present vocations. Rivier helps me believe that one person can truly make a difference. When we capture what we have learned inside the classroom and then apply it to the real world, beautiful things can happen. So let us use these skills, lessons, training, and knowledge acquired to advance our world. We can do this by starting small, but dreaming big.

Lastly, again, I ask you all to reflect back upon your own journey here at Rivier College for a vital reason. Some of you may believe you do not have one, but I think you all do. Your journey is different from your neighbor's. However, your journey is important, because when you reflect back upon it, you can examine the valuable lessons you learned. Utilize these lessons within your careers and life to enhance this world. Two big lessons I learned are perseverance and involvement. To be honest, I should not be here today, let alone be speaking in front of you all. Coming into Rivier, I was placed into a category, which labeled me as someone who might not succeed, someone who might not make it past freshman year. In addition, initially, I did not get into the nursing program; I started off as a biology major who had to confirm I could handle the nursing classes. Well, I have done a complete 180, obviously made it past my freshman year, and entered the nursing program. Thus, my lesson and message for you all is to not give up. I wish you all the perseverance to pursue your dreams, whatever those dreams may be; do not let anyone tell you that you cannot do something: you can, you just need heart and perseverance. My second, and last, lesson and message for you all is to get involved! It is never too late to become an active citizen. For those of you who were involved at Rivier, and those of you who did not get involved, I ask that you get involved after college. You can do this by joining professional organizations related to your career. In addition, you can join committees and organizations within your work setting. Trust me, getting involved is paramount; when involved, you can advocate for change and strengthen your work environment. When you become involved beyond the daily day-to-day tasks, you will be rewarded in ways that will foster your growth as an individual.

Thank you for hearing my words today. I wish you all the best of luck in all of your future endeavors. Make Rivier College proud! ■