

YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY

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I am honored to be standing here addressing you on this memorable day.

On behalf of the graduates, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you here today, who encouraged and supported us as we worked toward our degrees. I would especially like to thank the faculty members at Rivier who served us, not only as instructors, but as mentors and friends as well. I would also like to thank my husband and my family for being my biggest fans and inspiring me to reach my goals.

As I began to look back at the last three years, I couldn't help but remember my first class here at Rivier. Everyone walked into the room with one goal in mind and that was to obtain a Master's degree. Clearly we all had smiles on our faces in hopes that our expectations would be met and that we would soon find our places within the counseling profession. However, each one of us was brought here by different life paths. Every student had his or her own story outside of the classroom, and sacrifices have been made by all. But, as we have learned, without taking risks, there is no gain. Therefore, we made the commitment to balance our personal priorities with the priorities of school to enhance our lives as well as the lives of others.

As you leave Rivier College and continue on your journey through life, you will most likely remember this moment and all those moments left behind. You will remember your friends, your instructors, your achievements, and each milestone you made along the way. But, most of all, you will remember that you were part of a community here at Rivier, a community that embraces diversity, teaches tolerance, and allows people to work together. Truly, Rivier models that kind of community that we all dream of and should strive to create in this world.

If you will permit me to do so, let me make this charge: Don't ever stop dreaming and always strive to make those dreams a reality. Graduating from a wonderful community such as Rivier's can be such a terrifying feat. However, you can't let your commencement overwhelm you; rather, it should be the foundation upon which you build your future. The future beckons with all its hidden surprises and we must forge ahead with an ambitious heart and adventurous soul. Today is the day we must become true to ourselves and remain confident as we embark on newer adventures each day.

Life does not promise always to cooperate. Some days will be harder than others. But we mustn't give up; we must rise above all the challenges and start afresh. Starting today, there is no going back—only looking forward to the future.

Bessie Anderson Stanley wrote a poem in 1904, titled *Success*. Today there exists several variations of this poem and I would like to share with all of you my favorite version.

To laugh often and much,

To win the respect of intelligent people
And the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest
Critics and endure the betrayal of
False friends;

To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;

To leave the world a bit better,
Whether by a healthy child, a
Garden patch or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed
easier because you have lived.

This is to have succeeded.

You are all here today because you have succeeded, and this is the day you'll be recognized for those achievements. I congratulate you, the class of 2008, and wish you the best of luck as you continue on your life's journey. ■