



REGENT'S COLLEGE LONDON

Regent's American College London & Webster Graduate School London Graduation Speech by Dave Bolton

9th May 2009, St. Marylebone Parrish Church

Ladies, Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Friends, Family and members of the Faculty, there comes a time in awards ceremonies when someone not used to public speaking gets to stand up and be the centre of attention for a few minutes.

A short time for you perhaps, this is going to seem like an eternity for me.

In January, I was asked by the Faculty to give the speech at the Webster University Graduation Ceremony on behalf of the graduates and two thoughts flashed into my mind

The first was "What an honour" and the second was "HELP!"

So after careful consideration, I agreed to stand in front of you all this morning and attempt to put into words what this day means to all of us graduating today from both Regents American College London and Webster Graduate School.

Those who know me will realise that standing up with a prepared speech is something I rarely do. Rambling with occasional tangents, yes.....constructed speech.....not really my forte.

Like most things in life, this opportunity to address you today came with some guidelines.

Irrespective of what we know is going on in the world and how it is presented in the media, the speech was not to be cynical, sarcastic or negative. I was also asked if it would be possible to present something without having to mention Star Wars or Paris Hilton.

The speech was to be POSITIVE AND INSPIRATIONAL.....IT WAS TO BE UPBEAT

SoThanks for listening and Good Luck in whatever career you choose

Seriously, we as students stand in front of you after combining hard work, determination and dedication in order to graduate from the college today.

This is our moment of affirmation.....we have used the last few years to be constructive, optimistic and confident.....

According to the Oxford English Dictionary that is the definition of POSITIVEa state of mind which for me has been a constant companion since I made the decision to return to full time education three years ago.

A state of mind that we all can continue to draw on as we take the next step on our chosen path.

So how can we define INSPIRATIONAL?

The dictionary mentions “Having the quality to inspire”

What inspires us and more importantly who encourages us?

Personally, I have always been motivated by writers, musicians, film directors and artists, by sportsmen and women.....certain business leaders and politicians.....and by the sense of history and tradition that comes from being British.

However, I wanted this speech to be more than just a personal journey of inspiration.

I wanted it to encompass all of our hopes and dreams. To provide not just inspiration but encouragement and stimulation.

Not an easy thing to do in a short time.

Whilst also bearing in mind the diversity of students that have chosen London to be their place of study.

A multi-cultural college in a multi-cultural city.

So I took a step back and thought about where I could get inspiration to write this speech

I decided to go on holiday

As we know, it is easy to get to various parts of Europe from London and the existence of “no frills, cheap airlines” means that it is not difficult to visit areas of historical significance and find inspiration.

I went to Amsterdam, and visited the Van Gogh museum – dedicated to a man who became a success after his death in 1890 at the young age of 37. His works of art that have survived the test of time and have motivated many to follow in his footsteps.

Next stop was Italy.

In Florence I admired Michelangelo's "David"..... first presented to the public in 1504.A testament to drive and determination, that has the capacity to make you conscious of the time and dedication required to create this work of art,

And not just an opportunity to sell endless souvenirs.....

I headed to Rome, and crowded into the Sistine Chapel, the ceiling painted by Michelangeloon his back, and "under the supervision of the Vatican" from 1508-1512..... Four years of his life to create and develop a work that would inspire others after him and would leave an indelible mark on society.....

I visited the ancient Roman Ruins..... marvelled at the longevity of the Coliseum, which was commissioned in AD70 and took 12 years to complete and is still standing in 2009. Inspiration achieved through gladiatorial perspiration.

Finally I arrived in Venice again the ingenuity of the engineers who built a city on marshland and the fact that it has survived for hundreds of years is something that cannot fail to draw admiration..... even in an age of environmental concern, the city continues to defy nature (although it did rain whilst I was there and there was some significant flooding!)

Then I flew home to Gatwick Airport. It was not inspiring.

For something to be inspirational, it has to stir emotions. It has to make one realise our own potential and what we wish to achieve. To become inspired, we have to question what we believe we know.

Regent's College seeks to bring out this potential, the professors and the staff here want us to become inspired but they want us to question and to enhance our own knowledge and experience.

For that they have my thanks and my gratitude.

As we accept our degrees today, we should remember that success is not handed to us on a plate.....dedication to the task in hand and a desire to succeed has played an important part in achieving our goal.

What the staff of Regents College do is ensure that you go into the next stage of your life with the right tools for the job.

Learning is a continuous process. To survive the perils and pitfalls of life requires learning what are the right and the wrong way of going about things. We learn from our mistakes and (touch wood) we do it right the next time. Albert Einstein once said that "Anyone who

has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” The next step in our lives will be to try something new, to go out into the world and see what is out there.

If we approach it with the right attitude, we will succeed.

I will finish today by remaining UPBEAT.....

According to Wikipedia, Upbeat was

“a syndicated musical variety show produced in Cleveland, Ohio that aired from 1964 to 1971 which spotlighted the hit songs of the 1960s

Interesting without being helpful.

The dictionary was slightly more what I had in mind, and defined it as

“cheerful.... pleasantly optimistic”

This would fit perfectly with the hopes and aspirations of all of us that sit here today having spent the last few years immersed in our chosen subjects and we are now ready to embrace the real world.

Even the financial uncertainty that has become headline news can do nothing to detract from the achievements being honoured today.

I would like to therefore add my congratulations to the graduating classes of 2009, and also wish to say thank you to all of the staff of Regents College, especially the professors who have made this day a possibility for all of us.

Thank you for listening, enjoy the rest of the day.....and May The Force Be With You