

Engineering Student Address  
Commencement - May 2005  
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Good afternoon family, friends, faculty, and graduates. It is hard to believe that four years have passed since most of us started at UB. In some ways that time seems like just yesterday and in others it seems like eons ago.

Freshman year was filled with a number of “memorable” experiences: 8 am World Civ lectures, transitioning from high school classes of 20 students to college lectures of 200, roommates who thought that heavy metal was best listened to at 4:00 in the morning and that sleeping while it was light out was far preferable to sleeping while it was dark, and finally, the realization that winter in Buffalo starts in October, doesn’t end until April, and comes complete with its own 7 foot blizzard just in time for Christmas. Those who commuted may have missed the fun of dorm life, but instead got to enjoy the experience of campus parking and winter commutes. After our first year here many of us were probably wondering how we could survive three more years of this.

As we progressed on, however, these things seemed to matter less. Yes, classes became more difficult and now that World Civ lecture of 200 people didn’t seem so bad, but classes also reduced in size and became more focused and we made friends with many of the people who were going to be with us the rest of the way. We got a sense of accomplishment out of surviving that infamously tough class within our major and we started getting involved in different organizations and really making an impact on the campus and community. By the time this year rolled around we really started to feel like engineers. This is not to say that everything was perfect. I am sure everyone had at least one class with a professor for whom they didn’t particularly care or had to work in a group with members who didn’t pull their own weight. These experiences, however, helped us grow as individuals and develop methods for handling these types of problems, problems we will undoubtedly encounter again in our lives.

Our time at UB has been about more than just learning the facts for an exam. The technical skills are important, but they are just one piece of the puzzle. Just as important are the things we learned outside of class: how to live on our own, manage our time and responsibilities, and how to get along

with other people, even those who have ideas and methods different from our own.

Earlier I mentioned about shocks during our first year here. Well, within the first few weeks of our first semester the entire nation was dealt a startling blow with the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. I can still remember sitting in my dorm room watching it all unfold on TV thinking it was some sort of joke. It was no joke, and the results of the attacks still affect us today. As engineers we will be called upon to design the next generation of technologies to prevent these types of attacks and to mitigate their effects if they do occur. In many ways our actions as engineers will affect not just our own lives but the lives of everyone on the planet.

I will leave you now with these final thoughts. More scientific advancement has taken place in the last 50 years than in the preceding 3000 years. For those of you who didn't bring your calculators, that means it took less than 2% of the time to more than double the knowledge we have amassed as human beings. Twenty years ago when most of us graduates were born personal computers were not much more than glorified typewriters. Ten years ago I remember playing simple games on Apple II computers in elementary school. Today there is more computing power in my PDA than in the supercomputers that filled up entire rooms 20 years ago. I can only imagine where technology will be in 20 years from now when our children start heading off to college. The exciting thing about it is that we, as engineers, will be the ones bringing about these changes.

Now, as we walk across the stage, we close this chapter in our lives and begin writing the next. As with any good book, a single chapter cannot stand alone. The chapters before it develop the story and influence the upcoming events. The chapters that follow, likewise, are dependent on the events of this new chapter. Just so, your time at UB has been influenced by your earlier experiences, and your experiences at UB will affect what you do and how you act in the future. May these experiences help you make the best of your life and the world in which we live. I wish you all the best of luck and many fond memories both of these times and the future.

Congratulations class of 2005.