

FALL COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

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Good afternoon everyone!

To President Wubah and Dr. Judith, Trustees, esteemed faculty, and most importantly all of you soon-to-be graduates and the family and friends here to support you, THANK YOU for allowing me to share in this celebration. I am truly humbled to be here.

There are a few special people with me this afternoon that rarely get to attend my talks, so I just want to say "hi". My mother Mary Ann, my mother-in-law Dianne, my amazing wife, now DOCTOR Andrea Shirk - who you just met - and two pretty incredible kiddos down there that I'm really proud of, Haley and Tyler. Love you guys.

Today I'll share some observations about the world you're entering, observations that stem from being the CEO of a relatively large diverse employer. My kids sometimes ask me "Dad, what do you do?" "What's a CEO?" My typical response is "I don't do much, it's our amazing 2100 co-workers that really make things happen...my job is to just help them succeed". By the way, about 50 are Millersville alums. But having the honor of leading several great companies in a wide range of industries does afford me a somewhat unique perspective on markets and workplace dynamics, and I'll tap into that in looking at the TIME and the PLACE in which many of you are entering the workforce. Let's start with the TIME.

You have something to be optimistic about - this is one of the best times in recent history to make that entry.

Graduates, and families and friends - please raise your hand if you ever took an economics class. Let's try to get a little audience participation going here. If you did, you surely learned about the powerful market forces of supply and demand. Graduates, you're entering a period where the demand for educated workers is on the rise, and the supply is tightening. Consider the following:

- U.S. unemployment is the lowest it's been in 50 years, across all demographics.
- That's today, now look forward. Thousands of workers are hitting retirement age in the U.S. every day. At the High companies, we'll have over 200 co-workers retiring in the next 5 years, freeing up openings for others to move into.
- And projections show that over the coming decade there will be fewer students graduating from colleges due to declining birthrate trends. That might be a challenge for colleges and business, but it means opportunity for you.

Those economic principles you learned in school do matter. When demand for talent is high, and supply is tight, it means there are more options, wages can rise, and there will be opportunities for growth and development along the way.

Amidst that backdrop, you have a leg up. You are starting from a position of strength, having persevered to reach this exciting point in your life where you've invested in yourselves and

attained a high quality education from a high quality institution. That's a huge feat. Everyone here is proud of you! You've acquired critical thinking and communication skills within the base of a great liberal arts foundation. Add in your technical training in specific disciplines, and you have the potential to be the truly great workforce of the future.

Now, it's up to you to take advantage of that opportunity, but know that we are all cheering you on.

So, now is the right TIME, and I believe Central Pennsylvania can be the right PLACE.

Any history majors out there? If so, please raise your hands. Here's a quick Pennsylvania story you might appreciate.

In 1681 William Penn was awarded the colonies of what is now Pennsylvania and Delaware as repayment for a debt. In 1748, which was 271 years ago, my great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather purchased 175 acres of nearby land from William Penn's sons Thomas and Richard. I grew up on that land, and it's still in my family today.

But I've also worked in over 20 countries and lived in several different places. And I say without hesitation, there is nowhere I'd rather be than here.

Why? Because this region is unique, providing a rare blend of opportunity, economic diversity, quality of life, strong values, arts, diverse culture, and recreational activities.

Just consider a few recent accolades for where we are today, in Lancaster County:

- One of Forbes 14 Best places to travel to in 2019
- Newsweek's top 50 places to live in the U.S. in 2018
- Ranked top 10 on Gallup's well-being index in 2018

This doesn't happen by accident, and it wasn't always that way. In the 22 years since I graduated college, this area has come so far.

It happens because we are a caring community and we have an environment where citizens, government leaders, educational leaders, business leaders and community organizations get together and collaborate and focus on positive change, in ways that I've not seen elsewhere and in ways that will fuel this region's success for years to come. It happens because despite those accolades, we still know we can be better. It's in our culture, our DNA, and that's what we focus on.

All of that hard work has created a great opportunity for you to start strong locally, and if you're so inclined, to eventually build on that to make an impact nationally or even internationally.

There are many companies here with a broader outreach. At High we have facilities in 7 states. There are many other national and global companies that call this region home, like Hershey with operations in 11 countries, Case New Holland, Eurofins, the Armstrong companies, Turkey Hill Dairy, Clair Global, Auntie Anne's pretzels and more. I've worked with several of them. These are great enterprises!

If you're interested in healthcare, we're blessed to have truly world-class healthcare systems here, and last year U.S. News ranked Lancaster the #1 place in the country to retire, all of that meaning there will be huge demand for talent in healthcare and human services.

If your mission in life is to help our children and become a teacher, first THANK YOU! Tyler and Haley thank you. We're facing a shortage of teachers here in several areas, which means opportunities.

If you want to start or buy a small business, now, or in the future, we have one of the best organizations in the country, SCORE Lancaster-Lebanon, that is dedicated to helping small business owners and entrepreneurs get off the ground and be successful.

And we're home to incredibly unique industries, like the live entertainment industry cluster growing exponentially at Rock Lititz. There is literally no place in the world like Rock Lititz, and the companies there need talent to fill positions in engineering technology, design, logistics, and so much more.

All these great organizations plus others will have needs in occupational safety, environmental health, accounting, chemistry, customer service, and beyond. Sure - it takes effort, perseverance, and sometimes patience to find a good fit, but opportunities are out there.

Speaking of Rock Lititz, here's a perspective you won't hear every day. Some of the top bands and rock stars in the world come through there regularly, along with their large teams who make all the magic happen. They often arrive thinking they'll be in the middle of nowhere, and leave having fallen in love with the area. Some well-known entertainment industry professionals have even moved here recently because of this amazing area.

So here you are, in a special place that is ripe with potential. Maybe you have certain interests or circumstances that will take you outside this region upon graduation, or maybe you'll pursue an advanced degree. That's great too, there are many wonderful opportunities out there, but I want you to know that the grass is green right here in Central Pennsylvania. It can be a great place to start.

Lastly, I'd like to touch on your path from here and provide a few final tips.

The odds are your path will be more like a winding road. Sometimes it's a straight line, but often it's not, and that journey is part of the experience of life. Sure it's important to have a plan, an understanding of what you like to do and are good at (and when you find a career that matches both you're in a good spot so hold onto it!). But be prepared that new things will come at you, new challenges, new opportunities, new forks in the road.

For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to be an engineer. I graduated with a mechanical engineering degree, even got a master's, and I was a practicing engineer for a whopping 1 year of my life. I've had many different careers...sales, procurement, consulting, management. Same with Andrea, who has changed careers several times.

There's just no way that we could have predicted the paths we took in getting from our graduation to what we're doing today. You might not start in your dream job, but every job can be an important stepping stone on your way to finding your dream job. And let's face it, jobs will be impacted by technology and ever-changing market demands. So - flexibility and resilience are critical. But we never had a job we didn't enjoy, because we always found enjoyment in the challenges, in working with people, and in making a difference, whether large or small. And we viewed every job as important in our journey, part of establishing our personal track record as a valued team member. In fact, one of my favorite jobs was framing houses, where I learned to be

dependable and loved seeing the end result, a home. A lot of it comes down to attitude. Some days are just work, but if you don't find ways to enjoy it, it will show.

No matter what road you take, here are a few other tips from the perspective of an employer. There are no guarantees in life, but these can help you succeed, get noticed, maybe create new opportunities.

First, recognize that you are going through a big transition with important implications. For example, at school, you mostly get to choose who you have relationships with, while in work you do not, and so building effective relationships with a variety of people and personalities becomes critical to success. Business is all about relationships. In school, you're used to getting immediate quantitative feedback, a test score, a course grade. In the working world it will be less frequent, more qualitative, less precise. There are other differences, and taking the time to understand them will help you in that transition.

Second, please don't be glued to your phones. Look people in the eye when you're talking to them. Don't be snapchatting when they're talking to you. It's so simple, but showing respect and communicating clearly will set you apart.

Third, ask yourself... how will I differentiate myself and create value for my organization? What extra will I bring? I'll use the real-life example of 3 Millersville alums in our hotel company right now. All 3 are doing great and earning new growth opportunities. Why? All 3 do the basic functions of their job well, but on top of that they bring a ton of positive energy and always raise their hands to help others, which adds value to the team.

No matter what role you are in, leveraging your personal strengths to create value is often a good way to succeed and unlock new prospects down the road. There are many ways to do this. In my case, early in my career I created value by delivering more than what was expected and running towards tough situations and seeing them through, which required working incredibly hard in the process. An engaging personality was definitely not my strength, so I played to my other strengths...

Lastly, be a positive force for change, but listen and learn first. You'll see areas for improvement all around you. Don't try to change everything on Day 1. I love when co-workers passionately recommend improvements. I love it even more when they've taken the time to understand the current system enough to make a clear, effective case for change.

And I'm excited about the changes you will bring. About how you will make us better. Excited about the shear talent and enthusiasm in this room. Excited that we're at a time, and at a place, that brings great potential for you.

To the great Millersville faculty and leadership, I appreciate the investment you have made in our graduates. In preparing for today, I had lunch with 10 High co-workers who are recent Millersville alums, and they spoke very fondly of the support you gave them and the bonds you formed. And I'm appreciative of the family and friends who sacrificed to help all you graduates reach this point. I couldn't do what I do without my family sitting right down there. So take the time to celebrate and enjoy the holidays with them. You have earned it!

Congratulations, and thank you.