

Transcript of Student Address by Mia Patterson

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2017 Hooding Ceremony of Central Washington University

Friday 9, 2017

Student Union and Recreation Center Ballroom, Central Washington University

To my fellow graduates, we are officially in the 24 hour window to receiving our master's degrees.

We have completed our research, our classes, our projects, our theses, and now the only thing standing between us and getting our degrees is this ceremony, and a good night sleep.

It is typical at graduation ceremonies to discuss great obstacles that we, as graduates and individuals, have had to overcome in order to get where we are today.

We talk as if these obstacles, these mountains, are too difficult to overcome or climb.

But what if... (pause)... what if we chose to embrace those mountains and be thankful for their presence in our lives?

Life is all about perspective in that, you can choose to climb your mountain and feel accomplished once you get to the top, or you can complain and make excuses to prolong the inevitable climb.

As adults, and soon-to-be graduates, we have been faced with many mountains.

Remember when we thought we would never make it through high school?

Remember the frustrations in having to pick a college?

Remember the financial struggle of paying for your first car?

Remember the daunting stress of your dreaded thesis, project, performance or cumulative test?

Those are just a sampling of the personal mountains we have each had to climb in our lives.

Yet, we were all able to manage those climbs and make it to our seats in this room.

So let out a sigh of relief because you are getting ready to reach another mountain top... receiving your master's degree.

I was skeptical about continuing my education and getting my master's degree.

I didn't see the value in having to continue school for another two years to get another piece of paper.

I looked at the mountain that was graduate school and thought "eh, it's not that big of deal – I'll be fine with my bachelor's."

I turned away from graduate school and focused on my summer plans, then received a phone call from my mentors at Central saying "what are you doing with your life?"

To be honest... I wasn't doing anything. And, in reality, I had no good reason as to why I couldn't come back and get my master's. But, I knew I was over the idea of going through more school – I was burned out!

We spend, on average, 2,160 days, or approximately 12,930 hours, in the classroom from kindergarten through our senior year in high school.

Then we spend four years getting our bachelor's degree and there is just no way to even attempt to calculate the time spent on that venture.

Then we make the decision to add more time to get our master's degree.

If we were to average our college education to match that of our kindergarten through senior year numbers, we have each spent a grand total of 4,240 8-hour days in the classroom, with a grand culmination of approximately 19,410 hours spent on our education just to sit in this room today – talk about an incredible mountain to climb.

It was ultimately through my time as a graduate on central's campus that I was able to make new friends, experience new things, make new memories, and land a job right out of college.

I chose to come back to central because I knew I needed to conquer this new mountain top.

I also came to the realization that we never really make the trek up our mountains alone.

We have friends, family, loved ones; we have mentors, we have committee chairs, we have grandparents, significant others, we have siblings, we have cohorts, we have the attendees in this very room, and attendees watching from home, and we even sometimes have enemies that fuel us to reach these peaks.

I am fortunate for all of the challenges presented to me throughout my life, and throughout my time as a wildcat.

I frequently think back to the old me, who is still sitting at the base of that mountain called graduate school, and I smile.

Sometimes you just need to pick yourself up off the ground, lace up your shoes, and get to walking because you never know what is at the top until you get there.

As I stand here before you, I am humbled by my graduate experience and excited to reach this new peak with each of you.

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak this evening and I implore you to continue climbing mountains and climbing new heights.

Just remember - life's a climb but the view is great.

In closing:

“You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so...get on your way!”

Congratulations Central Washington University graduate class of 2017.