

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CEO

PORT OF OAKLAND, CA

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V.6

GOOD AFTERNOON.

THANK YOU, PRESIDENT GAUDINO, FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION.

MY THANKS ALSO TO PROVOST FRANK, THE CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, THE COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE, AND THE GRADUATING SENIORS OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY. IT'S A UNIQUE...HUMBLING EXPERIENCE, TO STAND BEFORE YOU THIS AFTERNOON.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU WHO GRADUATE TODAY. I SHARE YOUR EXCITEMENT.

AND IF THERE ARE PARENTS HERE WHO FUNDED ONE OF THESE GRADUATES, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FEELING, TOO: PRIDE....JOY....AND THE SENSE THAT YOUR CHECKBOOK JUST GOT A RAISE.

MY WIFE STEPHANIE AND I WILL WATCH OUR OLDEST GRADUATE NEXT WEEK. HIS BROTHER GETS OUT TWO YEARS LATER. THE YOUNGEST HASN'T EVEN ENTERED COLLEGE YET.

SO AS YOU WALK OUT TODAY— GRADUATES--, BASKING IN YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, TAKE A MINUTE TO REFLECT ON YOUR PAST FEW YEARS AT CENTRAL.

[PAUSE]

LIKE ANY SELF-RESPECTING PUBLIC SPEAKER, I WANTED TO START WITH A RELEVANT QUOTE THIS MORNING. NOT TO INSPIRE YOU....YOUR ACHIEVEMENT IS INSPIRATION ENOUGH. INSTEAD, I LOOKED FOR A QUOTE TO RE-ENFORCE WHAT I BELIEVE.

AND I FOUND ONE. IT'S FROM HENRY FORD.

HENRY SAID: "LIFE IS A SERIES OF EXPERIENCES. EACH ONE MAKES US BIGGER."

NOT PROFOUND, PERHAPS. PROBABLY NOT MEMORABLE.

BUT HIS ONE PHRASE...."A SERIES OF EXPERIENCES," IS WHAT I THOUGHT WE'D TALK ABOUT TODAY.

FOR ANY STUDENT, COLLEGE IS A SERIES OF EXPERIENCES. BUT FOR SOME OF US AT CENTRAL WASHINGTON, THOSE EXPERIENCES WERE DIFFERENT.

WE DIDN'T SPEND FOUR YEARS AT SCHOOL....WITH SUMMERS AT HOME....THEN STEP INTO THE REAL WORLD, LIKE MY SONS WILL DO. WE TOOK THE REAL WORLD TO CLASS WITH US.

FOR INSTANCE:

- MY CAREER BEGAN AT THE SAME TIME THAT COLLEGE DID. THAT'S WHY IT TOOK ME MANY YEARS TO GRADUATE.
- FOR SOME OF YOU, IT WAS CAREER....THEN COLLEGE....THEN NEW CAREER.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO GET AN EDUCATION? NOT SURE.

I JUST KNOW THAT CENTRAL WASHINGTON GAVE ME THE SERIES OF EXPERIENCES HENRY FORD TALKED ABOUT. AND I GOT THEM SIMULTANEOUSLY. WORK AND COLLEGE TOGETHER. IT SET ME UP FOR WHATEVER SUCCESS I'VE ACHIEVED IN LIFE.

[PAUSE]

A QUICK WAR STORY....

I WAS IN MY FIRST WEEK AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE PORT OF OAKLAND A FEW YEARS AGO. OUR TRUCK DRIVERS WERE UPSET AND READY TO GO ON STRIKE.

THERE ARE ABOUT 6,000 OF THEM AND THEY GET PAID TO HAUL CONTAINERS TO AND FROM OUR OCEAN TERMINALS. PROBLEM WAS, THEY SPENT MUCH OF THEIR DAY....LITERALLY HOURS....STUCK IN LONG LINES.

OUR PORT WAS INEFFICIENT. WE COULDN'T KEEP UP WITH THE WORK. SO INSTEAD OF GETTING PAID TO DELIVER CARGO, THESE POOR DRIVERS SAT IN THEIR TRUCKS—GOING NOWHERE. TO SAY THEY WERE UPSET IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT.

SO I WENT OUT ON THE LINE. I CLIMBED UP IN THE CABS, STUCK MY HAND OUT AND SAID...."I'M THE GUY IN CHARGE HERE....WHAT'S WRONG?"

AND BOY DID THEY TELL ME. IN COLORFUL LANGUAGE. I'D TELL YOU WHAT THEY SAID BUT THIS IS A FAMILY EVENT.

WE COULDN'T FIX THEIR PROBLEMS RIGHT AWAY. THAT TOOK SOME TIME. BUT MEETING THEM ON THEIR TURF....TALKING THEIR LANGUAGE....DEFUSED A TENSE SITUATION.

WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE? I HAD WALKED A MILE IN THEIR SHOES. ACTUALLY, I HAD DRIVEN A MILE IN THEIR TRUCKS....BUT THAT'S NOT AS POETIC.

AS AN UNDERGRAD AT CENTRAL, I HAD BEGUN MY CAREER IN THE WAREHOUSE AND TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS. I SCHLEPPED FREIGHT ALL AROUND PUGET SOUND IN A 40 FOOT TRACTOR AND TRAILER.

SO WHEN I MET FACE-TO-FACE WITH THESE WORKING MEN AND WOMEN, IT WAS ON COMMON GROUND. I UNDERSTOOD THEIR ISSUES. I'D BEEN THERE ONCE MYSELF.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY? YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOUR WORKFORCE WITHOUT HAVING DONE THE WORK.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULD ALL RUN OUT AND BECOME WAREHOUSE WORKERS OR DRIVERS. I ALSO BENEFITED FROM UNTOLD HOURS STUDYING FINANCE, ACCOUNTING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

BUT DOESN'T THE SUM OF ALL THOSE EXPERIENCES CREATE A PERSON BETTER-EQUIPPED FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD? I THINK SO.

THAT'S WHY I APPRECIATE CENTRAL SO MUCH. IT TURNS OUT GRADUATES...(POINT AT AUDIENCE)...ALL OF YOU....WHO ARE BETTER EQUIPPED.

MAYBE YOU MAJORED IN BUSINESS. COULD HAVE BEEN IN EDUCATION OR SCIENCE. GREAT, NOW YOU'VE GOT ACADEMIC GROUNDING, FROM AN OUTSTANDING COLLEGE.

BUT I'M BETTING THAT MANY OF YOU HAD A TASTE OF THE WORKING WORLD WHILE YOU WERE HERE, TOO. OR MAYBE IT CAME BEFORE YOU EVER GOT HERE.

I LIKE THAT. AND WHEN I HIRE....I LOOK FOR THAT.

BY THE WAY, MY HR DIRECTOR COULDN'T BE HERE TODAY, SO NO RESUMES....PLEASE. SEND THEM CARE OF YOUR PLACEMENT OFFICE ONCE I GET BACK TO CALIFORNIA.

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION.... OF HARD WORK....OF PUNCHING A TIME CLOCK.... THESE ARE CENTRAL WASHINGTON VALUES. THESE ARE VALUES I CHERISH.

I TRY TELLING THAT TO MY KIDS. THEY HAVEN'T BENEFITED YET FROM THE REAL WORLD EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPED MANY OF US IN COLLEGE.

MY HOPE IS THAT MY KIDS WILL HAVE THOSE EXPERIENCES. REMEMBER WHAT HENRY FORD SAID....IT'LL MAKE EM BIGGER.

(PAUSE)

NOW COMES THE TIME IN A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS WHEN THE SPEAKER GIVES YOU ADVICE. AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO PASS UP THE OPPORTUNITY.

WE'VE SHARED A COMMON BOND AT CENTRAL. SO MAYBE....JUST MAYBE....YOU'LL FIND A KERNEL OF RELEVANCE IN WHAT I SAY.

HERE GOES:

- THERE'S SATISFACTION IN HARD WORK — DON'T SHY AWAY FROM IT.
- THE BOTTOM'S A GOOD PLACE TO START. WHEN YOU REACH YOUR POTENTIAL, YOU'LL KNOW THERE'S A STRONG FOUNDATION.
- GET OUT OF YOUR BUBBLE. IT DOESN'T ALL HAPPEN IN AN OFFICE
- IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW BUSINESS WORKS.... MORE IMPORTANT... TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE.
- EDUCATION DOESN'T END TODAY. KEEP LEARNING. I GOT MY MBA AT 36.

OH....ONE LAST THING....SHOW UP ON TIME AND ENGAGE—FACE TO FACE.

BEFORE WE CLOSE, IT'S TIME FOR THE LAST PART OF A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS....THE ADMONITION. IT'S WHAT I HOPE YOU WALK AWAY WITH TODAY.

THIS ONE'S PERSONAL. IT'S ALSO POLITICAL: PLEASE DON'T SUCCUMB TO MISGUIDED NATIONALISM.

DON'T BE PART OF THE ILLOGICAL RUSH TO DRAW THE DRAPES AND TURN OUT THE LIGHTS. WE SEE TOO MUCH OF IT TODAY....IN BRITAIN....ITALY....FRANCE....AND RIGHT HERE IN THE U.S.

DON'T DISENGAGE FROM THE WORLD.

GLOBALIZATION HAS BEEN THE STORY OF THE 21ST CENTURY. IT HAS PRODUCED AN ERA OF UNPRECEDENTED, WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT HAS LIFTED MILLIONS FROM POVERTY.

YET THERE ARE FORCES OPPOSING GLOBALIZATION. THEY'RE UNRAVELING LONG-HELD ALLIANCES, GUTTING MULTINATIONAL AGREEMENTS. AND THEY'RE CREATING BARRIERS....PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC ONES.

THIS EXTREME PROTECTIONISM....THIS US VS. THEM....IS DAMAGING, FRUSTRATING...AND IT'S ALSO FUTILE.

FREE TRADE IS THE WAY THE WORLD HAS EVOLVED. IT HAS MADE US BETTER – ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY. WE SHOULDN'T ABANDON THOSE PRINCIPLES.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT HAVE TRUMPED BREXIT AND BORDER WALLS.

THE INTERNET AND GPS DON'T STOP AT THE WATER'S EDGE.

THEY WORK EVERYWHERE. THEY MAKE US ONE.

I MAY NOT USE TWITTER. BUT I KNOW ITS POWER TO FACILITATE INTERNATIONAL REACH.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS CANNOT OVERRIDE IT. THEY HAVEN'T GOT THE POWER.

THAT BELONGS WITH YOU, AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON EVERY OTHER CAMPUS – RIGHT DOWN TO THE LOCAL MIDDLE SCHOOL. GLOBALIZATION IS WHAT YOU KNOW....WHAT YOU LIVE.

YOU LEARNED ABOUT IT DURING STUDY ABROAD....OR MAYBE FROM PLAYING “CALL OF DUTY” ONLINE AGAINST FRIENDS IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

ONCE YOU LEARN IT....ONCE YOU LIVE IT....THERE'S NO GOING BACK. DON'T LET THE REACTIONARIES TRY. YOU NEED TO TAKE A POSITION AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

WHY DO I CARE ABOUT THIS? TWO REASONS.

THE FIRST IS ECONOMIC...AND IT AFFECTS YOUR STATE AND MINE. THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.

WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF A TRADE WAR. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS IMPOSED HIGH TARIFFS AGAINST CHINESE STEEL AND ALUMINUM. CHINA, NATURALLY, HAS RETALIATED WITH TARIFFS AGAINST U.S. GOODS.

TRADE BARRIERS DESIGNED ARTIFICIALLY TO PROTECT HOMEGROWN COMMODITIES ARE THE ENEMY OF FREE TRADE. THEY UNDERMINE FREE TRADE. AND FREE TRADE HAS BEEN THE BACKBONE OF WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

IF YOU LOOK AT THE LIST OF CHINA'S RETALIATORY TARIFFS....LIKE I DID....YOU'LL BE CONCERNED. THE LIST TARGETS HIGH-VALUE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

MANY OF THOSE TARGETED FARM GOODS COME FROM YOUR STATE....AND MINE. FRUITS....NUTS....WINE: THESE THINGS ARE PRODUCED IN WASHINGTON AND CALIFORNIA. THEY'RE SHIPPED TO ASIA FROM PORTS IN SEATTLE, TACOMA, AND OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

WHAT WILL HIGHER TARIFFS DO TO THEM? PRICES WILL GO UP. DEMAND WILL GO DOWN. AND CHINA'S BOOMING MARKET FOR AMERICAN EXPORTS WILL WITHER—PARTICULARLY OUR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS PROTECTIONISM? CERTAINLY NOT U.S. WEST COAST GROWERS. AND NOT CHINESE CONSUMERS WHO REACHED MIDDLE CLASS STATUS DESIRING THE OUTSTANDING QUALITY OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS.

THE ONLY WINNERS I SEE ARE A FEW THOUSAND STEEL WORKERS SOMEWHERE IN THE U.S. AND A FEW POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS WHO PORTRAYED GLOBALIZATION AND FREE TRADE AS EVIL.

LOST JOBS....LOST INCOME....AN IMPASSE WITH THE WORLD'S NO. 2 ECONOMIC POWER....THAT'S WHAT WE'LL GET FROM ANTI-TRADE POLICIES. AND ONE MORE THING....LOST OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU.

THAT'S MY SECOND AND FINAL REASON FOR OPPOSING THIS MISGUIDED PROTECTIONISM.

[PAUSE]

I'M DELIGHTED BY THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXIST TODAY FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES.

YEARS AGO, YOUNG PEOPLE FOUND JOBS IN THE HOME STATE.

NOW, THE ENTIRE WORLD IS YOUR MARKET. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PLACES WHERE RECENT GRADS I KNOW ARE WORKING:

- LONDON;
- SYDNEY
- ULAN BATOR.

THAT LAST ONE IS IN MONGOLIA, BY THE WAY.

I MARVEL THAT GRADUATES HAVE THE IMAGINATION...AND GUMPTION....TO WORK IN A PLACE I COULDN'T FIND ON A MAP. I HOPE YOU SET YOUR SIGHTS JUST AS BROADLY.

THIS IS THE POINT IN THE SPEECH WHERE THE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER SAYS THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS. AND THE SPEAKER IS RIGHT.

YOU HELPED CREATE THIS WORLD OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS. YOU SUSTAIN IT. I KNOW YOU WILL PROTECT IT. WHY?

BECAUSE, IN STATES LIKE WASHINGTON AND CALIFORNIA, FREE TRADE AND THE WORLD ECONOMY ARE WHAT YOU GREW UP WITH. TRADE IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT. IT'S WHAT YOU KNOW.

AND IT'S WHAT'S RIGHT FOR A WORLD STRUGGLING TO COME TOGETHER....NOT PULL APART.

SO....NO PRESSURE. JUST GO OUT THERE AND SAVE THE WORLD FOR THE REST OF US. YOUR EAGERNESS TO LEARN, TO SET GOALS, AND ACHIEVE MAKES YOUR FUTURE LIMITLESS.

AND ENJOY THE DAY. YOU'VE EARNED IT.

THANK YOU.