

Expectations

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To all those who have worked hard; to those that have put in the effort, the long hours and lack of sleep; to those who struggled to comprehend rather than merely pass . . . congratulations, you've earned your places here.

Now what? We are faced with decisions that can influence the rest of our lives. We are confronted with many expectations; our own, that of our peers, friends, family, and faculty. And, many of you have already made those choices and faced those expectations.

So . . . the next phase of your life . . . does it fulfill your expectations, or another's? Is this path what you want, or something you have been urged to do rather than squander your potential.

Frequently we allow ourselves to become chained by others' expectations. We have all been victim to it; the more conscientious among us more so than others. Do others have the right to dictate how we use our abilities, our wants and aspirations be damned?

To those who would place these demands on us, you lie on the other side of the coin. Our lives are not yours to live vicariously. We are not here to elevate your status or prestige. Whether we want to be doctors, lawyers, engineers or pursue advanced degrees is our decision. If we need time to figure out what exactly we want to do, we should be allowed it without pressure. These are our lives.

I am not preaching the disruption of society, rebellion against authority, or the automatic rejection of the suggestions and expectations of others. I am not preaching the single-minded pursuit of your agenda without regard to the destructive effect your actions may have on others. I'm asking you to think. I'm asking you to find what works for you and not dictate the way others should live.

I don't believe I'll actually change anything here today. My speech probably falls on deaf ears. Others may be indignant. You might be wondering how many speeches we'll force you to endure, or you may see the irony in this speech. To all of you, I urge you to think without preconception or prejudice. Find a balance in your lives. Live your life as you wish and allow others to do the same without interference.