

**Bill Rutherford
University of Tampa
Graduation Speech
May 4, 2017**

Good Morning Class of 2017....what a day... I can't tell you how excited and humbled I am to be here with you today. As I look out over this great audience, I am reminded that 30 years ago, I was in your place, out there, Graduating from the University of Tampa.

I have to say, it is a little surreal to be here now, not sure I would of pictured this back then and I guarantee you most of my professors would not of pictured this....., you see I was just an average student with middle of the road grades, and although I had goals and aspirations, I was still not sure exactly what I wanted to do or what life had in store for me.

As I flash back over the past 30 years since I sat in your seat, I recognize I have been fortunate to have lived a blessed life, I have been married to my wife who I met here at the University of Tampa as she is a 1988 graduate, and we will shortly be celebrating our 30th anniversary, We have two great kids who are pursuing their degree, I have travelled the world, had the opportunity to meet and work with incredible people and today I help run the largest healthcare company in the country. Not a

bad flashback for a guy who spent more time at the Rathskeller than the Library.

I have great memories and had great experiences here at UT. Not only did we get a great education, but we had a little fun along the way and made some great friends.....I know you did as well.....you know my generation is just very thankful we didn't have iPhones, Snapchat and Instagram back then.

I thought this morning I would share with you some of the things I have observed and lessons I have learned in the 30 years since I graduated from UT, in that I hope, no matter what your goals or aspirations are, that the observations I have learned will help you as you begin and continue your life's journey.

First though, I have to congratulate you on being here, that fact that you are here and you have earned through I know hard work and effort, this degree from the University of Tampa, will be from this day forward a lifetime asset for you, and if nothing else matters today, we are here to recognize and celebrate with you and your family and loved ones here today, this is a very proud moment for them and I know for you.

But like most assets, it is how you put it to use and how you operate it that will determine its ultimate value. So let me share with you 3 observations that I believe will help you get full value of this degree you have earned today.

First, while this degree is a lifetime asset, the most important asset you have, that is even more sustaining than this degree is your Personal Character. This may not always get talked about in various settings, but your character is what will define your life. Traits like Integrity, Honesty, Treating people with respect and civility, doing the right thing the right way will be your greatest asset you will ever have. It will sustain through all cycles of life, both Professionally and Personally.

These character traits are not on or off traits nor are they simple as you either have or don't, they are matters of degree and consistency, and constancy. So you must be conscience and deliberate about living out those traits to the best of your ability.

My simple test for character, is am I living my life in a way my Parents and my children would be proud.

The second observation I can share with you is to search out and to live with a strong sense of purpose. In today's society what I believe we need, and what I love about today's generation is the pursuit of a purpose, isn't great to think about all the good that occur as we live with a purpose centered life.

In my company we subscribe to and talk to a lot of young people about a success profile, a profile I believe in strongly. That is, there is always a lot of talk about success, and the pursuit and accomplishment of success, but defining it, getting your arms around that is----well it is elusive....

The success profile is three simple questions, and that I can feel successful if I can answer three questions in the affirmative-

Am I doing what I want to do? Am I going where I want to go? And am I becoming who I want to become?

Three simple questions, but 3 with a lot of meaning....Doing what I want to do, suggests I have given conscience thought about where I am in life, and what experiences and contributions I want to make and a reminder to live in the present.....Going where I want to go suggests I have thought about my future with goals and aspirations at various

stages of my life....my goals are different now than when I was in my 20's or even 30's, and this helps me have a vision for my life....and becoming who I want to become suggests, I have given thought to the traits and characteristics that are important to me, and ensuring I give attention to my personal development.

A lot of talk is given to finding your passion and your purpose...I am here to tell you it is all right if you haven't found that yet,I didn't know my purpose or passion at the time I graduated....so if you have found yours, I am envious and excited for you, if you haven't don't sweat it, it will come in due time..... in the meantime if you are doing what you want to do, and going where you want to go, and becoming the person you want to become.....It will help you live with a strong sense of purpose and calm today.

Lastly, I would tell you to be in constant pursuit of personal development and seek to learn all you can through experiences, through travel, through meeting people, reading books and just having a desire to learn and understand.... Simply be willing to commit to the effort to achieve your goals and aspirations. A very wise person told me early on in my career, that the successful person is willing to commit more effort than the average person, so always be willing to commit to whatever

your goals and pursuits are. By your presence here today, and you earning your degree, you have already proven you have the drive and commitment....just recognize it doesn't stop here, but rather starts here and there is a large beautiful universe to pursue.

So the last thing I can tell you that I have learned in the past 30 years from Graduating from the University of Tampa, and what I can virtually guarantee you.....That both in your Professional life and your Personal life, you will experience a full range of life's cycles...from peak periods of excitement and joy...the birth of a child, to the marriage of your life's love, to a big promotion or an event that culminated from all of your effort...but you will also experience challenging cycles...the passing of a loved one, and career set back or whatever the case may be.

I will also guarantee you that your Personal Character, your ability to live with a strong sense of purpose with your unending pursuit of curiosity and development, will allow your peak cycles to be as high as they can be, and be an incredible buffer to the down cycles.

Most of all, don't forget Life is a Journey, it is not about the destination, it is about the path you choose, so choose a path you can be happy on and that will fulfill your life's dreams.

So I offer my heartfelt congratulations to you, and know that I share the pride, joy and excitement of everyone here today supporting you. I look forward to witnessing and hearing great things that will come out of this class of 2017.

Most importantly, I look forward to seeing you, yes you, the one out there who is not the obvious one, do incredible things with your life, and you don't know it now, but in 20 or 30 years you will be here, passing on your learnings to the next generation of University of Tampa graduates. Who among you might that be?

So Class of 2017, job well done and best of luck to each and every one of you.