

College of Lifelong Learning

I am greatly honored and delighted to join this class of 1999 -- the last graduating class of the 20th century! Closing out this Century and opening up a new one has a parallel in your own lives. While this ~~ancient~~ academic ritual, ~~celebrating the continuity over the centuries of formal learning~~, may seem a conclusion to something that you have worked hard to achieve, I would remind you that the word "commencement" means to commence or begin.

So, even as you and your loyal families and friends, who have offered their support to you ^{all} these years, are breathing a sigh of relief that it is finally over, and you can get back to living your life-- you find yourself in a commencement ceremony, celebrating a beginning. A beginning of what?

^{This}~~Your~~ college is, I think, the only college in the nation to carry its mission in its name -- to proclaim, for everyone to see, that their purpose is to educate graduates for lifelong learning. If the College -- and you -- have done your jobs here, you have developed the discipline for self-study, the skills to learn from a variety of sources, and the sense of ~~curiosity and wonder~~ to motivate you to continue learning throughout your lives.

Lifelong learning ^{to day} is not a privilege or a right; it is simply a necessity for anyone, young or old, who must live with the escalating pace of change. When life was simpler, one generation could pass along to the next generation what it needed to know to get along in the world; ~~tomorrow was simply a repeat of yesterday~~. Now, however, the world changes faster than the generations, and we

must all live in several different worlds during our lifetimes.

Margaret Mead once remarked that the world in which we are born is not the world in which we will live, nor is that the world in which we will die. The world in which most of us were born, was a world ^{without} ~~in which~~ computers ~~were unknown~~, but the world in which we live has become so dependent on computers that we find our society coping with the formidable problem of Y2K.

Many of you in this class of 1999 embarked upon your educations here to take advantage of exploding new career opportunities. Technological and social change have created and wiped out entire industries and occupations in the space of a single decade; and motivated and capable lifelong learners have become so valuable to employers that they are investing billions in training programs that require continuing learning. A CEO of a major company remarked to me recently that although they fear losing well-educated employees ^{in which they have made large Ling investments,} ~~to the multiple opportunities available~~ today, ^{he said} it is better to train someone and have them leave, than not to train them and have them stay!

I am pleased to join you as an honorary member of the class of 1999. As that well-known philosopher, Pogo, reminded us " We are surrounded by insurmountable opportunities," ~~as we go forth today~~ ^{to meet the inevitable challenges of the 21st Century.} *May you go forth today, prepared to meet 12 opportunities continuing to L.*