

Excerpts from the President's Commencement Remarks
May 11, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a day of enormous pride as we recognize the hard work and achievements of today's graduates.

In recent years, I described Commencement Day as your Independence Day and your Super Bowl Sunday – because it is your victory after much hard work. Commencement Day is also a Heidelberg reunion. Family and friends are returning who we first met when you were moving your students in to Heidelberg.

You brought a lot of things that your parents thought you needed: fabric softener – never opened, sweatshirts – never washed, and an iron – never used.

It is often said that parents give their children two things: roots and wings. Graduates you worked hard and earned this achievement. But, it was often family members who set you on a path to success. Today we welcome all family and friends, both those who have been here, and those who have not. We salute and thank you for your part in making this great day possible.

On this Mother's Day, we offer special thanks to the mothers in the audience ... and the class. I ask all mothers and grandmothers – including my wife, Lisette -- to stand, and I invite the graduates to thank their families, friends and mothers with a rousing ovation.

This is not only a day of celebration for students, families and friends, but also for our talented faculty. They have been enriched by the contributions of today's graduates to the intellectual life of the campus. Our dedicated faculty has prepared the graduates to be leaders in their careers and communities. Students and faculty have learned from each other and produced remarkable results. I would like for my faculty colleagues to stand so that the graduates and their guests can thank you for your contributions to knowledge and your commitment to education.

This is a wonderful day, a day to reflect on the people and events that shaped your time at Heidelberg. You are a very special class to me because it is my last Heidelberg commencement. I will hold this day, your day, forever in my heart. I am honored to be leaving with you, the Class of 2008.

When most of you started at Heidelberg, millions were reading *The Da Vinci Code*. Thousands were discovering "McDreamy." Hundreds were standing in line to see the latest *Star Wars* movie. But as graduate students and freshmen, the big numbers for you were two and four - the likely number of years to complete your degree. And most of you made it! Some took a few more years. Some a few less.

For me, and I expect for you, the time has flown by. You have found 'Berg Pride in the ever-present orange shirts proclaiming "See You At the Game." And, the games have been grand! We celebrated NCAA appearances, OAC champions, national champions, All-Americans, Academic All Americans and record-setting performances. Who can forget wrestling, basketball and baseball championships? And how about the football season – that first win against Oberlin and the Homecoming Game against Baldwin Wallace will long be remembered. What a year for our senior student-athletes!

Not only have our seniors performed well on the athletic field, they have also been exceptional in the classroom. A large number of them like Andrew Lemmon, Jeff Tracy, Christine Nelson and Jessica Evans are off to graduate school. Others are launching careers. Nikki Locker is starting her "dream job" – working at Disney in Orlando ... as a character performer. Nikki, I think you'll be a terrific Minnie Mouse!

For many, Heidelberg is a family tradition. Sidi Kazungu follows her sister, Liz, with a Heidelberg diploma. Andrew Sather's parents are both Heidelberg graduates. And twin brothers, Brandon and Justin Zuchoswski, both receive their diplomas today. Aaron Weaver and Lori Webb will soon be side-by-side for a lifetime as they marry and head to Oregon for Aaron's graduate studies.

In recent years, at the New Student Welcome, we've asked freshmen an important question: "How do you want to be remembered at Heidelberg? Or, "When you leave here, what will your legacy be?" The banners you have seen so often in the Great Hall and that hang about you today speak to the legacy of those who have gone before you.

Now is the time for you to assess the impact – the legacy – that you have created at Heidelberg. If you are concerned that your legacy may be more memorable for time spent in the Clover Club than in the classroom, I have good news for you: you have another chance.

Heidelberg has prepared you to live out its mission statement -- *to live a life of purpose with distinction*. Your class banner reads: "*We found the key to success*." Your key is a Heidelberg education and your journey to a life of purpose with distinction begins today.

I challenge you to use your education to create change. Unlock opportunities for all. Continue to learn. Dream big. Laugh often. Make memories. Serve humbly. Angel McMichael understands humble service. She has been a member of the ROTC and is in the Army Reserves. Her husband, Joel, graduated from Heidelberg last year and is currently deployed in Kuwait. In the coming months, Angel will be moving to Fort Hood, Texas, for military service. We thank the McMichaels and all in this audience who have someone serving our country.

As educated women and men you know have the responsibility to assume leadership and ensure strong communities. In all you do, I ask that you keep Heidelberg close to your heart. Never forget your Sweet Alma Home. I know that I never will.

Graduates, you have my congratulations, my gratitude for your contributions to the college and my best wishes as you begin your life's journey.

Thank you.