

Fairfield University Graduate Commencement, May 19, 2013

Commencement Address

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Institute of Medicine of the U.S. National Academies.**

“Ite, omnia incendite et inflamate”

(Go, set the whole world on fire and in flame)

Fr. Von Arx, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty and administration, family, friends, and most importantly, today's graduates:

Good afternoon. Indeed it is a good afternoon; an afternoon to celebrate the achievements of the graduates; an afternoon to thank those who have supported and taught them; and it is an afternoon to affirm, to indeed proclaim that today's graduates are not only receiving a degree but also a call to be transformative, accountable leaders.

Truly it is my joy and privilege to participate in this year's graduation of Fairfield's Certificate, Master's, and doctoral students. I recall my first speech at Fairfield back in 1975. I hope this one will go more smoothly. Back then I was taking a course on rhetoric from Professor Arthur Riel. In the middle of my speech in Gonzaga Auditorium on the topic on energy conservation no less, the whole auditorium suddenly plunged into complete darkness. Though it threw a wrench into my delivery, it guaranteed an opportunity to introduce some humor, and I ended up with an “A”.

This is the second graduation on the Bellarmine lawn today. This morning over 800 undergraduates heard an inspiring address by Fr. Garanzini. Thank goodness Fr. Von Arx did not give me that intimidating assignment. It would have required more audacity and humor than I can muster to deliver a final commendation of sorts to 800 undergraduates entering “real world.”

This afternoon's graduates are, shall we say, a more mature audience, or at least one somewhat closer to my own age and life experience. Many of you are here not only with proud parents but also as proud parents. You have not spent the last four years living the undergraduate life at

Fairfield Beach. Many of you have been working while juggling family responsibilities, and studying. In most cases you are already deeply rooted in the “real world” so I have tailored my comments appropriately.

The diplomas being awarded this afternoon remind me of the promotions in rank I experienced in the Army Medical Corps. Those were more about potential than past performance. They were about the expectation for leadership. Expectations were also present in medieval times when the first Masters degrees were awarded. Those degrees were effectively a license to teach at the university. A Master’s degree was tied to an obligation to teach, at least for several years. Today it should still be seen as a call if not a duty to serve, to lead, and to fulfill a social contract.

During your time at Fairfield each of you has acquired diverse knowledge and skills. However one thing all of you have in common is that your diploma will open new opportunities for leadership, perhaps as soon as tomorrow morning.

The educated, especially at the professional level, are parties to a social contract. Empowered professionals, such as each of you, in recognition of their status, assume an obligation to use their position and capabilities to lead the creation of more equitable societies where health, education, security, and opportunity are more accessible to all, where the treasury of talents God has given to each of us, can be fully at the service of all of us.

In recent years it has been my privilege to work with the School of Nursing to implement recommendations from two landmark reports that call for leadership development in the health professions. In 2010 the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences, released a study entitled: *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. That report highlighted a remarkable evolution in nursing and put nurse leadership at the center of efforts to remodel a US health care system that falls short in the delivery of quality, efficient, and comprehensive care.

For the second report entitled *Health Professional Education for the 21st Century*, I was one of 20 co-authors from around the world. That effort provided a blueprint to educate transformative leaders for health system improvement.

At Fairfield these two calls to strengthen leadership by health professionals have been heard. The Kanarek Family Foundation has supported the School of Nursing's development of a new Master's program in Nursing Leadership. However, the need for leaders who can be agents of change is not unique to the health professions. All the professions represented by this afternoon's graduates are in sore need of transformative leaders to drive social accountability to address diverse societal ills.

Historically the task of becoming a professional focused on becoming an expert, a master of information and a certain set of skills. For medical education over the course of the last century informative or information-based education evolved into a second phase, formative learning, in which professionals complemented the information with a set of professional values reflective of the social contract between physicians and the communities they serve. Transformative learning, the third wave of learning that is emerging now is about acquiring core leadership attributes. The focus is on the highest aspirations of our professions in the context of a social contract to address society's priorities rather than one's own in a trustworthy manner.

My most gratifying engagement with Fairfield in recent years has been supporting international collaborative work of the School of Nursing and the Center for Faith and Public Life. They have been pioneering creative service learning programs in Nicaragua to help illustrate the professional social contract.

From 2010 to 2012 Fairfield as a university also focused on global citizenship. Students came to recognize the widespread global inequity that is often rooted in ill-health. And in turn that ill-health itself is often rooted in underlying social determinants such as grinding poverty, subpar education, poor housing and sanitation, unsafe workplaces, pollution and communal violence. Only a global sense of responsibility and integrated, transformative leadership from multiple professions, including all of those represented by today's graduates, can solve such problems.

Last year I delivered a talk to the deans and to the advisory boards of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Nursing School. I emphasized that every discipline at Fairfield has a role to play in advancing the universal cross-cultural value of health. A myriad of professions are now engaged in public-private partnerships to advance health locally and remotely. Some of these are quite creative and capitalize on technical skills not often immediately thought of in the context of

global health or social accountability. Companies like Coca Cola use their global logistics systems to help move pharmaceuticals to remote villages. KPMG, Pfizer, and IBM support corporate global service programs sponsor employees to travel overseas as volunteers to help developing country partners strengthen accounting, laboratory, and medical informatics capabilities. Warner Brothers has made films to support global HIV prevention. And engineers who work for cell phone companies in Africa are now arranging to share their cell tower power supplies to power refrigerators for vaccine storage in remote rural areas. The social contract of professionals is sometimes most synergistic when it draws in unlikely partners and works collaboratively across disciplinary bounds.

The obligation of business to share wealth and know-how as a global citizen goes hand in hand with accepting the fruits of globalization. And that responsibility is not just about avoiding harm but also advancing the common good. The disciplines of business, engineering, education, counseling, nursing, and science all need transformative leaders who see their vocation as including a social mission even if it is not spelled out in a job description.

One of my favorite commencement addresses was the 2006 Harvard speech given by Harvard's most famous dropout, Bill Gates. In that address Mr. Gates, an undisputed transformative leader in both business and global health philanthropy said:

“I left Harvard with no real awareness of the awful inequities in the world – the appalling disparities of health, and wealth, and opportunity that condemn millions of people to lives of despair. I learned a lot here at Harvard about new ideas in economics and politics. I got great exposure to the advances being made in the sciences. But humanity's greatest advances are not in its discoveries – but in how those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity. Whether through democracy, strong public education, quality health care, or broad economic opportunity – reducing inequity is the highest human achievement...”

Educators at all levels can provide an awareness of the kind that Bill Gates did not get in his admittedly truncated time at Harvard in the 1970's. The well-off typically don't see the sufferings of the world, whether they be in Bridgeport or Bamako. Part of the social mission of educators is to correct that.

The transformative leadership you are called to cultivate is not about making decisions like a CEO. Mother Teresa, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ignatius Loyola, and indeed my fellow honoree this afternoon, Sister Patricia Farrell, have all exhibited transformative leadership even though none have been captains of industry or elected political leaders. Regardless of your position in the pecking order, embrace not only your organization's formal mission but also its social mission and that of your profession. And if that social mission has not been articulated in your circumstances, it is an opportunity to lead and define it.

I have spent over 30 years in Washington around top military medical leaders as well as among the Nation's leading scientists and federal policymakers. I want to use my last few minutes to highlight ten key attributes I have commonly found in transformative leaders. Because I can't memorize as well as when I was a pre-med student here at Fairfield, I have taken the liberty of creating a mnemonic device. The ten attributes that I offer for you to consider cultivating can be associated with the ten letters that spell the word: LEADERSHIP.

The "L" stands for Loyalty, loyalty to principle, to your profession's ethic, to your colleagues, to your organization, and to those you serve. – Loyalty is central because transformative leadership achieves impact through collective effort.

The "E" stands for Ethics – Loyalty of course needs to be oriented by ethics. All leaders are required act according to ethical principles. At the National Academies we strive to lead by "speaking truth to power." We regularly bring evidence-based scientific insight to bear on contentious issues such as climate change, gun violence, and vaccine safety. Being ethical sometimes requires moral courage. There is quote from Albert Einstein carved into stone beside the main door our building that speaks to the mandate to speak truth to power. Einstein said:

"The right to search for truth also implies a duty; one must not conceal any part of what one has recognized to be true."

The "A" in LEADERSHIP stands for Aspiration- A transformative leader does not accept the status quo. However, to paraphrase the Cheshire Cat from Alice and Wonderland, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there". Without an aspiration, a leader won't be leading anyone anywhere in particular. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had his aspiration of a racially more just United States. Perhaps a less exalted but more accessible vision of a role

model was last year when aspirational leaders at the Avon Foundation for Women asked to partner with my program on global violence prevention to organize a global app challenge. Teams of domestic violence prevention experts and socially conscious techies from around the world competed to create ingenious phone apps to support domestic violence prevention. Avon is not a company that most would immediately think of as an aspirational innovator in global social accountability but it is. All companies can be as creatively aspirational as Avon but first they need aspirational employees from across the professional ranks.

The “D” is for Diplomatic- Transformative leaders lead through persuasion, through deft negotiation, and consensus-building. Communication skills are core. Today’s leadership challenges demand a collaborative spirit that necessitates diplomatic skills.

The second “E” in Leadership is for Energizing. Transformative leaders are catalytic. For those of you who are by nature shy, I would point out that transformative leaders need not inspire with their words or through dramatic interventions. Often it is merely by being a broker behind the scenes who gathers a coalition of the willing and gives structure to an initiative.

The “R” is for Responsibility- A transformative leader is willing to take responsibility for what needs to be done. I want to share another example. One of my heroes this past year has been Dan Reingold, the CEO of the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale in NY. A lawyer by training, Dan could have just focused on running a stellar elder care facility according to the standard model. However he recognized the often hidden problem out in the community of elder abuse. In response he created the Nation’s first emergency shelter for victims of elder abuse. Dan saw a problem others often ignored, one that needed transformative leadership. He took responsibility and became an agent of change. His acclaimed emergency shelter model for victims of elder abuse has now proliferated around the country including a shelter right here in Fairfield at the Jewish Home for the Elderly.

The “S” is for Selfless service – As one learns at a Jesuit university, our highest calling is to serve others. Every time I go to Walter Reed for medical care I am humbled by seeing the wounded military personnel who put their safety and personal interests aside to serve selflessly. I also regard though as selfless servants the thousands of scientists who every year serve without compensation on the advisory committees at the National Academy of Sciences. However, self-

less service is not limited to the military or non-profit entities. As I have already mentioned there are also tremendous opportunities for service in the for-profit sector, some of which play to specific and very special comparative advantages only found in the corporate world.

The “H” in LEADERSHIP is for Health – So how is concern about health a general attribute of a transformative leader? Health, in the words of the World Health Organization is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but rather the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. That sounds a lot like the Ignatian concept of Cura Personalis or “care for the entire person” in which each person is cared for as an individual with specific abilities, challenges, needs and potential. A transformative leader, whether Jesuit, professorial, corporate, military, governmental, or otherwise, embraces the well-being of individuals and communities as core.

The “I” is for Integrity- By integrity I am referring to the need for credible, transformative leaders to be grounded in a consistency of character across the domains of beliefs, values, methods, and action. An effective transformative leader is not hypocritical or mercurial. She can lead by example because she is consistent, predictable, and has integrated character traits.

Finally, the “P” in Leadership is for Perspective – To the degree I have been successful as a leader and as a mentor, I attribute much of it to keeping perspective, to recognizing the big picture, and to avoiding over- and under-reaction. Perspective puts the other nine attributes of a transformative leader in the proper relationship with each other.

So bearing this all in mind, tomorrow morning sleep in a bit if you can. A transformative, socially accountable leader needs to be rested too. Enjoy the additional letters after your name. Be proud. You have worked hard. Let your colleagues congratulate you and your family reclaim you. Graduating as you are from a Jesuit university I would be remiss if I did not mention Ignatius Loyola’s call to transformative leadership 500 years ago when in the early days of the Jesuit order he sent Francis Xavier on the great missionary adventure to India and Japan. As these two transformative leaders parted, Ignatius directed Francis to “Go forth and set the world on fire”. Now I can’t claim Ignatius’ authority but I will try to channel it. Use your new degrees to earn a better living but also to be transformative whether it is in health, education, pastoral care, business, engineering or teaching. Use the power that flows from your newly

degreed status to serve others and to gather others to do the same, to be transformative, and to innovatively set the world aflame. Thank you.