

Fairfield University Graduate Commencement, May 19, 2013

Valedictory Address

By Erin Radocchia, of Westbrook, Conn., the School of Nursing

Father von Arx, members of the Board of Trustees, distinguished faculty, family, friends, and fellow graduates:

Thank you all for being here on this momentous occasion. It is with great pride and honor that I speak to you today. Being a true Fairfield legacy, as both of my parents are Fairfield Alumni, I could not be more proud to be here. When I was only a few months old, I was the youngest “student” at Fairfield University, getting passed from my mother to my father in between classes in the halls of the School of Nursing. Eighteen years later, those halls would become the ones I knew best, as I pursued my own Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing at Fairfield. I was inspired, not only by my parent’s thirst for knowledge and commitment to service professions, but also by Fairfield’s Jesuit ideals. Throughout a rewarding career in nursing, when faced with the desire to further continue my education in nursing, there was nowhere besides Fairfield I even considered attending.

Having found my passion early on in nursing, I have always been grateful to use my skills and knowledge to serve and care for others. Instilled with the Jesuit foundations of rigorous academics, care of the whole person, mind, body, and spirit, as well as providing service to others, I continuously strove to provide and advocate for excellence in patient care. I also was inspired to question and always seek out new and better solutions. Five years into my nursing career, I found myself in a unique position. I had found a passion in my professional life, and I felt greatly rewarded in the interactions I had with my patients on a day-to-day basis. There was something missing however. The passion of learning ignited in my undergraduate days continued to burn, leading me to pursue a graduate degree in nursing. After studying nursing theories and practicing as a nurse for several years, the desire to become an advanced practice nursing in the face of the ever-changing healthcare field filled me.

I am sure that many of you shared similar experiences, setting out on a certain career path. Maybe it was shaping tomorrow’s future in education, or using your creative

talents in the arts and sciences. Some of you planned to take design developments to new heights or improve our business world. Whatever it was that you are passionate about, you were eager to learn more. After all, we are here today to celebrate the incredible accomplishments each of us has made in completing our graduate studies.

The decision to pursue a graduate-level education posed many new, unique challenges for all of us. Struggling to balance family-life, work-life, and graduate school, we all learned to become “master’s” at sharing ourselves across many responsibilities. It wasn’t always easy, and we often had to make sacrifices along the way. However, we can all say now that this reward has been so well worth the journey.

During our time here at Fairfield, we have been fortunate not only to participate in a higher level of learning, but also to do so in an environment that supported us each individually, intellectually, and spiritually. We were encouraged to always seek the magis, “the more;” to fully develop our individual capacities in service to others. It is because of this environment that we are better prepared to be excellent in what we do beyond today. We have not only learned the content and knowledge of our individual areas of study, we have learned to reflect on what we are called to do, as well as the importance of giving back to others.

There were times throughout the program, where even being encapsulated in this supportive environment that I wondered what was I doing. I am sure that I speak for all of us, regardless of which program we were enrolled, that we felt overwhelmed at times, as this process of growing was not always easy. Not only were we faced with the challenges we chose to bring on ourselves, as a community, we faced many serious challenges. The tragedies of Sandy Hook Elementary School and the Boston Marathon bombings shook us to our cores. During these heart-wrenching times, where it is often easy to question one’s faith, we were fortunate not only to be in a community of learning, but one that cares for the whole person. Candlelight vigils at the Egan Chapel, moments of silence and open counseling hours brought us together, and together we found the strength to forge on. This time forced all of us not only to examine our callings, but also allowed us to grow intellectually and spiritually, in our community of faith.

As we move on, we will all be faced with new challenges. Many of us are experts in our current professional fields and will be challenged with establishing ourselves in

new advanced roles, as novices. Some of us may be entering the work force for the first time, unsure of what challenges lie ahead. We are, however, all armed with a greater sense of self and a greater awareness of the world around us, able to impart our skills and passions throughout our community. We have not only learned the rigorous academic content and knowledge of our areas of study, we have also learned so much about ourselves, and grown in faith and love.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend the greatest of thanks to all of our families, faculty members, friends, and support people. It is because of you that we are all standing here today. Thank you for your unending support throughout our challenges, and always encouraging us to continue our paths. As we step forward today, ready to impart our new knowledge and understanding with those around us, American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson reminds us that, “Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it...Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” My parting hope for each and every one of us is that we continue to rise to the challenges we face, and in everything we do, that we do good, we do more, and above all, we do it with passion and love. Graduates of the School of Education and Allied Professions, College of Arts & Sciences, School of Engineering, School of Business, and School of Nursing, congratulations to all of us, the Fairfield University Graduate Class of 2013!