



Thank you David for the kind introduction. Greetings to the Board of Trustees, the Administration, the Staff, the Alumni and to all the Parents and family members. To my great colleagues. And most importantly to all of the graduating seniors. Since the students have chosen me to be here, I hope that you will all understand as I direct most of my comments to them.

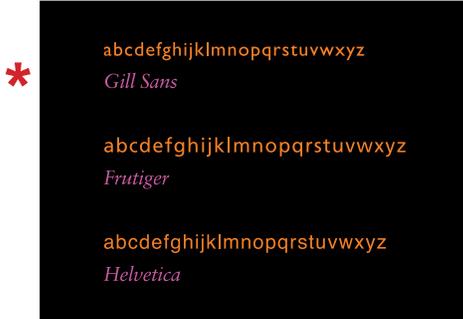
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“Commencement speeches were invented largely in the belief that outgoing college students should never be released into the world until they have been properly sedated.”

—Garry Trudeau

I’m honestly not quite sure what I’m doing here. \*When I first found out that you had selected me to be your faculty speaker, I wondered why you all chose me. What did you think I might be able to offer you in a brief speech on this important day in your lives? Was there some magical formula for success? An inspirational challenge I should present to you? After pondering this question for awhile, the only conclusion I could draw was that—knowing me as well as some of you do—you had decided it was a great way to make some money. I believe there’s a pool going and that a stop watch was activated the moment I reached the lectern. You’ve wagered among yourselves on how many minutes and seconds into this I will start crying. And I’m guessing there are side bets as to the level of those tears. I’m imagining the scale being something like “wet eyes” then “visible tears” followed by “silent pauses with quivering chin” and finally “big blubbery mess”. It’s a pretty good bet that someone is going to make some money.

Once I knew why I’d been selected, it was safe for me to consider what I’d be talking about here. What do I know that you might not know but might benefit from knowing? What can I say that hasn’t already been said? What could these wonderful people still want to learn?



You know that I can speak for hours about typography.

\*The differences between Gill Sans, Frutiger and Helvetica. But I only had ten minutes and there clearly wasn't enough time for this exhilarating fifteen-hour lecture.

So, I wondered what else did I have a thorough knowledge of that I could build a speech around— \*Cooking and baking. And eating of those things. \*Broadway musicals. And \*Barbra Streisand. But those topics just didn't seem to fit the bill. In the end, I decided that this was really about me and you. Our relationship as teacher and student. As individuals coming together for learning. In the end so much of what I want to say to all of you is just wrapped up in what being a teacher means to me. But I struggled with how to frame that...how to find a way to talk about it. You'll likely be happy to know that I missed every deadline given to me on the development of this speech. The only real justice in this would be if you were all the ones I had to turn it into and you could give me an F for missing all the due dates. But poor Paul—a hanglider—someone who faces danger on a weekly basis—was the one I made more and more nervous by the day. Thank you for your patience Paul.

\*We usually start these graduations off with lots of thank you's to the parents and administration and the teachers. And not that we don't all deserve it... But...it seems to me that the people we really need to thank are all of you....

So, thank you for choosing this school. For choosing MIAD as the place to develop your talents. To invest your time and energy. To challenge yourself and all of us to be the very best.

I'm not sure whether to thank you or berate you for embracing all of the new technologies so thoroughly. Despite some of our struggles as teachers with these things, we have little choice but to jump on board. You're racing ahead of us. And dragging our bruised bodies along behind you. You all grew up with technology in a way that many of your teachers did not. But, all I can do is thank you for your patience with us and for keeping us all moving forward.

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*Sorry about that...*

\* Amid the thanks, I'd like to interject an apology here as well. I'm sorry that all of us old folks took over Facebook. It was your idea. It was your social network. I know that—but it has been so great for me to reconnect with people from far away and long ago. But my favorite thing about Facebook is that it's been a wonderful way for me to be in contact with all my former students. So please stay in touch. There are alumni groups for the school and various programs there—as of this afternoon you will be members of those groups, so please sign up. I am amazed that I have more than 600 friends on Facebook—and that I actually know all of them. It's amazing to me because it makes the insecure/shy and backward teenager from high school—who still fears groups of high school boys he is convinced will stuff him into a locker—feel popular. So, again, I'm sorry, but you're stuck with all of us “oldsters”.

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*Thanks!*

\* Thank you for letting yourself be challenged and for challenging me in return. We push and prod one another. It wasn't instruction. It wasn't the dispensing of information. It was learning.

And thank you for your inspiration. I can't believe the work you create. It surprises me. It takes my breath away.

Some of it makes me uncomfortable because it challenges my thinking of what art and design is. But again, I thank you for doing that because it makes all of us be better artists, designers and citizens.

Thank you for your hunger and thirst for more. The thing I have loved about working with most of the students at MIAD is that you're not satisfied with the satisfactory. You want to do the excellent. The superb. The sublime. And it works out great because that's what I expect from each of you. Here's a truth: I have never given out so many A's and B's in my 15 years of teaching as I gave out this year. And those of you that have had me for class know that's not something I easily do. But you deserved them. And what I love is that when you got the B. You strove, not for the B+ but for the A. What more could a teacher ask?

Today is a big deal. I want you to know that we get that. For most of you it has been a 16+ year journey to get here. Year-after-year of taking in and applying the knowledge you'd learned. But, we all know the learning doesn't stop here. \*It just takes on new forms. You'll miss lots of things about MIAD. And we will miss having you here. But, you're really just going into a different type of classroom. So, let's look at it that way. New teachers. New classmates. New things to learn.

I know how important this day is because, believe it or not, I can remember my own graduation from college and how important it was to me.

It was 1979. \*31 years ago. It was the age of disco, \*I was listening to Gloria Gaynor, \*Donna Summer and Barbra Streisand.

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“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”  
—from the musical “Annie”

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I had started out in high school wanting to be a junior high art teacher. But my school of choice—a small liberal arts Christian college in Indiana—didn't have a degree in that. Besides art, I also loved working with children, so....I got my BA in elementary education.

When I graduated, we were in a slumping economy. Teaching jobs had all but dried up. I had one job offer—\*to teach in a one-room school house in Lewellen Nebraska. 12 grades. 20 students all at the same time. It was Little House on the Prairie and I was going to be Miss Beadle\*. And, yes, I would have lived in the apartment above the school.

Clearly this just wasn't a good idea. so...I was worried. My parent's were worried. I'd just spent all this money on a degree that I likely wasn't going to use. and—truth be told— though I loved children—I wasn't a good teacher of children. \*Though my great gift of exceeding patience was certainly helpful, my equally high tolerance level for noise and my inability/lack of desire to maintain classroom discipline, wasn't seen as a great gift by the other teachers. It probably wasn't the best career for me. So I sold clothes for awhile. I did some substitute teaching. I did what I needed to do. I tried to find my way.

I was able to convince an agency of the Mennonite church that—despite any actual education or experience—I would be the perfect graphic designer for them to add to their staff. I had some natural talent that I think my boss saw; I was persistent, and I was also willing to take the \$8,500 salary they were offering. (The equivalent of a whopping \$25,480 in today's terms. \*But I dove in. I learned in my new classroom. And, I found a new career, and something I really loved.



\* “My philosophy is that not only are you responsible for your life, but doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.”

—Oprah Winfrey

\* “The important thing is this: To be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.”

—Charles Dubois

Over the next few years, I got some formal education. My skills and knowledge grew and then eventually I found my way to grad school because teaching was calling me again. But this time it was for teaching college students about design. At 36 I sold off all the stuff that any young professional accumulates and headed to grad school. Another new classroom. It isn't the path for everyone. My family was concerned. My friends thought I was nuts. \* But it was the right choice for me because I ended up here—doing what I love to do. And having taught for 11 years at MIAD. It's not that it was easy. But it was the path I chose. The road I followed. The classrooms I learned in. And, I can be nothing but grateful because it's brought me to this point. And I couldn't be happier—to have been chosen by all of you to be here on this stage is an honor I will cherish and appreciate for the rest of my life.

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“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

—Melody Beattie

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“I'm not a teacher: only a fellow-traveller of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead—ahead of myself as well as you.”

—George Bernard Shaw

\*I can't give you any predictions about what's ahead. None of us really knows. I am still dazzled by this age we're living in of ipods and iphones and ipads. Of wireless internet. Of worlds that can be created on computer. Of the creative genius of OK GO videos. That Glee can actually be a highly rated TV show and enjoyed by people other than just me. I grew up with a party line phone. A TV without a remote. We didn't know what a cell phone was. Digital Cable and Streaming Video? what? I listened to vinyl. And then 8tracks. And then cassettes. And then CD's. I don't own an ipod, but i know my time is coming.

And, so I need to wrap this up, but what would a graduation speech be without a little advice. So here's what I've got: What I've learned since I sat where you are 31 years ago and graduated from college.

It's a lesson that those of you who have had me in class before will likely roll your eyes at. Because it's what I always talk about. The two H's. A great composition comes from a clear Hierarchy and beautiful Harmony. And I believe the same is true for our lives.

If you follow your bliss, your passion, those things that are most important to you—how can you go wrong? And if you're prepared to keep those things in your life in balance, you'll be able to still create a great life, even when you encounter twists, turns, break-downs. Joys. Sorrows and everything in between. \* That is what life is. And, as difficult as it is sometimes, we have little choice but to embrace it all if we're actually going to live.

\* "Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death."  
—from the musical "Mame"

And, as you're following your particular path of bliss, remember that as trite as it may sound, it really is about the journey, and not the destination. Life is about the discoveries. Be open to them. Live your life—don't let it go by without actual consideration and intense involvement. I'm still unsure where I'll end up, but what I do know is that I'm immensely happy that this is where I am right now. Teaching isn't what I do. It's who I am. For bad or good, it defines me and is one of the clear hierarchies of my life. For many of you being an artist and designer is the same. For some of you, it isn't. And that's okay too. You may have yet to discover where your real passion lies, but don't sit back and think that it's going to magically appear. Go find it.

\* "Today I live in the quiet joyous expectation of good."  
—Ernest Holmes

And as you're balancing your hierachies, bring harmony to your life. \* Focus on the positive interactions of your particular life's components. The harmonies that you've brought together. But remember that harmony is not always about commonality. It's sometimes about beautiful contrasts. Orange and Blue. Active and Inactive. Catholics. Protestants. Baptists and Episcopalians. Jews. Muslims. Athi-

ests & Agnostics. Gay, Straight & Bi. Democrats, Republicans and Independents. Tea Party, Coffee Party, Martini Party. There is always a way to balance contrasts—by looking for the positives in each of those contrasts and figuring out how they add to your composition. Be civil while working with your contrasting harmonies. Without it there are only sides standing in opposition to one another and that will get all of us nowhere. Stand up for your beliefs, but, in doing so, remember that not everyone looks at things the way you do. Reach for understanding. If we want someone to respect us for our ideas, what can we do but respect them for theirs, even if we disagree? Where can we find common ground? If we spend our time concentrating on that rather than the things that separate us, we will get much farther. You're heading into a difficult economy. It has all of us a bit scared. For us older folks, we're worried about our retirement savings, whether our jobs will hold out. And we're worried about you. your futures. But despite my worries, In the end, what I have is faith. \*In all of you. I think you're better than me. I think you can create a world where peace lives. Where things get accomplished. I'm counting on it. On all of you.

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“Go out there and be so swell  
you'll make me hate you.”

—from the musical “42nd Street”

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“I've heard it said  
That people come into  
our lives for a reason  
Bringing something we must learn  
And we are led  
To those who help us most to grow  
If we let them  
And we help them in return  
.....Because I knew you  
I have been changed for good...”

—from the musical “Wicked”

Graduation is tough for me. While all of you are taking off to start exciting things, I tend to wallow for weeks at the close of the semester. Feeling sad that our relationship is changing. I feel like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz remarking at Glinda's first exit upon their meeting in Munchkinland: “People come and go so quickly here”. \*I can't believe that our time together at MIAD has come to a conclusion. But I want to again say Thank you to each of you for making me a part of your life. It has been such a pleasure. A joy. I have loved being your teacher. You have made me a better person, and I will always be grateful.