

Ohio
Wesleyan
University

PRESIDENT ROCK JONES' 2010 COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

Sunday, May 9, 2010

2010 COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

Rock Jones, Ph.D., President of Ohio Wesleyan University
May 9, 2010

Welcome to this glorious day and to this momentous occasion—the 166th Commencement exercises at Ohio Wesleyan University. For our graduates, this day represents the culmination of four years—or more—of dedicated work, commitment, adventure, occasional pain, and, we hope, enduring satisfaction and accomplishment. For our faculty and staff, this day represents the pinnacle of the academic year. It is for the accomplishments that will be recognized today that we come to this campus every day. And it is you—the students who complete the rigorous challenge of an OWU education and earn the diplomas you receive today—who inspire us, motivate us, and give us fulfillment in the calling that brings us to the enterprise of education.

Nearly four years ago, most of you arrived at OWU to begin your studies and to pursue your passions. You came from across the country and around the world. You made this campus your home, and on this campus you have left your mark.

Many of you have told me of the value of the relationships you formed with members of this faculty and of the impact of caring administrators and staff on your time at OWU. You have benefited from the opportunity to tailor your education to your individual interests. You learned through a curriculum that led you deeply into the world of ideas, the richness of literature, the wonder of scientific discovery, and the complexity of history; cultivated in you an appreciation for beauty and the arts; and caused you to pause to contemplate disparities in the human experience.

You accepted the challenge to expand your world view, to gain new appreciation for difference, to embrace ambiguity, and to identify the values that will give shape and meaning to your life. You honed the capacities of critical thought, of systematic analysis, and of persuasive writing. Through athletic competition and participation in the arts, and through the numerous organizations in which you have participated, you learned the invaluable skills of teamwork and problem solving, of leading and following. You traveled widely, studying, volunteering, and interning in settings from central Ohio to the ends of the earth. You grew in ways you could not have imagined four years ago, and you formed friendships that will remain with you for the rest of your lives.

Here at OWU, you have benefited from an education that connects theory to practice and has prepared you for leadership in a global society. On a campus with students from 57 countries and with a faculty that comes to us from around the world, you learned to value the diversity that is woven into our social fabric. In your coursework, you explored the nuances and complexities of our global society.

Some of you spent a semester studying the history and culture of Tanzania. Some of you traveled to Mexico to understand immigration patterns. Some of you leave on Tuesday to travel to Vietnam to explore the impact of the United States on the history of Vietnam, and vice versa.

Closer to home, some of you met weekly this semester with a recently arrived Somali family as part of your study of Gender and the Immigrant Experience. Outside of the classroom, some of you helped create the Citizens of the World, or COW, House in an effort to develop greater understandings of national and cultural differences.

You are part of a student body that last year documented more than 45,000 hours of community service, helping OWU gain recognition as one of only six colleges and universities in the country to receive a President's Award for Community Service in Higher Education. You created Channeling Peace to raise money for Doctors Without Borders in Pakistan; here in Delaware you provided translation and other services to Hispanic families and their children at Woodward Family Resource Center and at the Grace Free Clinic at Andrews House; you organized the Love Day on the JAY in response to a group that announced plans to bring its message of divine hatred to Delaware; you created the Bike Movement and sparked new understandings on campus of the importance of environmental sustainability; and you responded in extraordinary ways to the devastation caused by the earthquake in Haiti. You already have shown that you are prepared to devote your lives to solving global problems and making the world a better place for every person.

Here at OWU you were offered the intellectual tools, the social sensitivities, and the moral ballast to navigate the life that awaits you, to fulfill the passions you already know and those that are yet to be discovered, to become leaders in every sector of human society, and to make an impact, every day, for the common good. We send you forth with appreciation for what you have accomplished here, with interest in who you will become and what you will continue to accomplish, and with confidence that you will make a difference, for the good, wherever you go and whatever you do.

To the parents and families of our graduates: You have invested everything you have in these young women and men. You made deep personal sacrifices in order for them to be where they are today. You did so with love and with hope. You made the ultimate gift to Ohio Wesleyan University when you entrusted them to our care and gave to us the responsibility for guiding them on the path to becoming educated citizens. I salute you for your commitment; I am honored to share your pride on this day; and I thank you on behalf of all of us at OWU and on behalf of these graduates seated in front of you. With you, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the OWU Class of 2010. Congratulations to each one of you, and best wishes in all that lies ahead.