

Ohio
Wesleyan
University

**CLASS PRESIDENT ELIZABETH TIERNEY FISHER '15
COMMENCEMENT REMARKS**

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Friends, Family, Faculty, Staff, Board of Trustees, Alumni, President Jones, Mr. Haygood, and most importantly My Fellow Seniors:

This is it. Today is the day that we celebrate four years of education, hard work, new experiences, and lifelong memories.

For some of us, today is the end of our formal education. There will be no more back-to-school shopping trips, no more buying textbooks, and no more move-in day.

For those of us continuing on to graduate school, although we will be back in the classroom again, many of us will be not only students, but also teachers, helping to guide a new year of undergraduates toward this moment for themselves.

Today is a day to be celebrated. For many, a college degree is something that has been a lifelong expectation. Something that was an inevitability following high school, and something that, despite our best efforts, many of us take for granted.

In a poll taken last year, only 35% of Americans under the age of 30 have reached this point. Today marks a life-changing achievement that we should all be very proud of. Sitting behind us today are a sea of people who share that same pride in us.

Our families and friends have been an integral part of helping us reach this point. I would like to take this moment to congratulate, not only the graduating class of 2015, but also those who have supported us unconditionally to this point.

With today being what it is, I think that a special congratulations and thank you needs to be awarded to all of the mothers out there. There is an Irish proverb that states: "A mother holds her children's hands for a little while, but their hearts forever." Thank you, Mom, for holding my hands till this point. Without your love and support, I would not be where I am today. Happy Mother's Day.

The time for hand-holding is over, though. For most of us, we will be moving out soon. Moving on to jobs or away to school and not looking back. Although in some moments, this can feel like the end, it is in nearly all ways, the beginning.

Life after college is a scary thought. Coming from the four years of security that OWU has provided, the thought of truly being on our own is, at times, unfathomable. Ohio Wesleyan, whether we believe it or not, has prepared us for this, though.

The education that we take from this institution is one that will stand the tests of being on our own. We have learned not only the things that matter for our chosen career path, but also how to be a member of our global community.

The opportunities that this school has afforded us are numerous and will help us through the difficult navigation of our futures that lies ahead.

We graduate today with skills that will help guide us through whatever may come our way. We graduate today with a support network of friends and professors that will support us in our future endeavors. And we graduate today to join a legacy of 173 years of distinguished alumni.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to leave you with an anecdote about my time here at OWU:

My freshman year, I came to Ohio Wesleyan planning to study vocal performance.

All of my time and effort in high school had been pointed at this singular dream, and it looked as though the dream was going to pan out. Shortly after the beginning of freshman year, I had an injury, and it became apparent that if I wanted that dream to come true, I would need vocal cord surgery. After finals in December of freshman year, I packed up my room and moved home to have surgery and give myself the best chance possible to regain my dream.

Standing before you today, you'll notice that I am not wearing a pink tassel; my original dream did not work out for me. However, the experience gave me a sense of drive and perseverance that I never would have gained if I had not faced that obstacle.

In one of his songs, Garth Brooks sings "Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers". In our lives, we all have, and all will continue to face adversity. We will all want things or pray for things that may go unfulfilled or unanswered.

As I found out early in my college career, this is not a reason to give up. If anything, it is a reason to press on.

As Helen Keller said: "A bend in the road is not the end of the road...unless you fail to make the turn." Make the turn, Class of 2015. Because around the bend there will be something new, exciting, and different waiting for you.

You are prepared to handle anything that life will throw at you and when it seems that it will be too much, you have a support system of lifelong friends to fall back upon.

At the close of today's ceremony, we will each begin a new chapter in our lives. Ohio Wesleyan will forever be a place that we hold near and dear to our hearts, but never again will it be home.

In the remaining few moments, think about what this place, these people, and these experiences mean to you, and pledge to yourself not to fall out of touch with them.

Carry them with you into the new lives that we will all soon be starting.

Thank you all for making my Ohio Wesleyan experience one that I am proud and happy to carry with me.

Congratulations, Class of 2015!