

**President Lahey, fellow trustees, distinguished faculty, honored graduates, parents, friends, and guests... ..It is a great honor and privilege to be here. I'm delighted to share this day with all of you who are receiving your graduate degrees and to be part of one of the proudest moments of your life. It's also a very proud moment for me to receive an honorary degree from this outstanding university.**

**Let me congratulate all family members and friends and wish all mothers a very happy mother's day. You should be very proud of what you have contributed to the accomplishments of our graduates. Last year I sat where you are sitting and watched as my daughter Jennifer walked across this stage to receive her graduate degree. I know the pride and elation you feel today.**

**But most importantly let me congratulate our graduates. Your hard work and dedication have brought you to this milestone event in your life. I commend each of you for your high academic achievement. You will join a prestigious group of over 30,000 alumni of this great university. Men and women who work as accountants, teachers, executives, clinicians, therapists, television producers, nurses and more. Professionals, working across this region, this nation and this world, helping to make life better for so many of us.**

**We've watched as the components of a great world-class university have all come together here at Quinnipiac University under the leadership of President Lahey and his administration.**

**We've seen...**

- **An assemblage of extraordinarily gifted and talented faculty and teaching practitioners.**
- **An expansion of instructional and laboratory space utilizing advanced cutting edge technology -- most notably, the Echlin Health Sciences Center, the McMahon Mass Communications Center. And of course the exciting newly planned North Haven Graduate campus.**
- **We've also seen how the quality of life for students has been improved, as evidenced by the new TD Banknorth Sports Center, along with the spectacular new residence halls being constructed on the York Hill Campus.**
- **And we've seen the university's well- deserved reputation strengthened even more, as again this year Quinnipiac was named one of the nation's top universities by U. S. News and World Report.**

- **But more importantly, what makes a great world -class university is a commitment to excellence that is so much in evidence here at Quinnipiac. Thank you President Lahey for bringing such an outstanding institution to this region.**

**I shall follow the instructions that my two daughters gave me regarding my comments here this morning. They implored me to be sincere, be brief and be seated. I realize that I am the only thing standing between you and either a much needed bathroom break, or some sandwiches at the tent, or, well, just getting on with the rest of your life**

**And don't feel like you have to take notes, or remember anything I say. At my own graduation back in 1973 at the University of Wisconsin, I'm pretty sure I was inspired, but I can't remember by whom. I have vague recollections of some nuggets of wisdom that must have been passed on to me, such as:**

- **No matter how large an area you are in, if a fly is present, it will land on you.**
- **People with coughs always have concert tickets.**

- **It's always the "Up" escalator that's out of service.**
- **You know business is bad when even the people who don't intend to pay aren't buying.**
- **The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits.**
- **If the shoe fits, buy the other one, too.**
- **And, something you may learn later in life: The spouse who snores always falls asleep first.**

**So, okay, I admit it. I can't give you the meaning of life or the secret of success. I can't offer my own version of "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" – or any of the other habits that didn't make the top seven – except maybe for Number Eight: "Write a short book about the first seven and make a fortune!"**

**I can only promise that eight-five percent of what I'm about to say will be brilliant, and the other fifteen percent will be baloney. The problem is, I don't know which is which.**

**So, here goes.**

**First, don't worry about if you're going to be successful. You will be. And the reason I know that is I can just look at what you've done to get to this point today. You've already demonstrated that you're hard working and intelligent and that you are among the best and brightest. Your degree from this wonderful university is proof of that. You're going to walk out of here with a great education. In short, you're already ahead of the game. And why not? You earned it.**

**Second, take your talents, your abilities, your intelligence – and everything you've learned here – and apply it to the fullest to whatever you choose to do in life. And, if you don't know what that is yet, that's okay. Oh, I can feel your parents cringing when I say that, because they think they've written their last tuition check. They may have already rented out your room. But we know that most people will change careers many times in their lives. The key is finding something you're really good at that you really enjoy, because if you really enjoy what you do, then work isn't work anymore, is it?**

**All you have to do as graduates of this outstanding university is to go out into the world, discover your inner self and attain that greatness to which you are all destined. That's all you have to do!**

**All you have to do as graduates of this wonderful university is to go out into the world and excel in your chosen profession, make a lot of money and live a happy life. That's all you have to do!**

**All you have to do as graduates of Quinnipiac University is to leave today and take your place in communities all across this state and this country, living complacently, oblivious to the inequities, needs, suffering and deprivation all around you. That's all you have to do!**

**But, is that all that you will do? Or will you use your genius and your brilliance to make life better for the less fortunate amongst us?**

**Winston Churchill put it this way. He said: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."**

**Could it be that you have a greater purpose in life. You're smart and perceptive enough to be able to look around you and**

**realize that there are people the world over – as well as right in your own hometowns and neighborhoods – who are less fortunate than you. There is no shortage of pain and suffering in the world. And as simple as it may sound, each and every one of you can do something that will make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate than you are.**

**I'm talking about giving of yourself –your time, your talents, your energy, and your basic good will. Whether it's donating a few hours a month at a free health clinic, or tutoring special needs children, or serving lunch at a local soup kitchen, or serving on a board of a public service organization ... there's something each of you can do to make someone else's life better. You have the ability to make the world around you a better place to be, one person at a time. I hope you have the desire and that you care enough to do so.**

**Like many others, I have devoted a major part of my life trying to help others, and I can honestly say that my life has been enriched immeasurably because of it. My heart and my conscience will not allow me to live my life insulated and isolated from the cruelties of poverty and despair. They are not mere abstractions in my mind, they are real and they are destructive forces.**

**Were it not for the generosity of many wonderful people, I would not be standing before you this morning. I'm talking about people who cared so much, and were so passionate about trying to make life better for others, that they unselfishly gave of their time, their talent and their treasure to try and make a difference in the life of a poor kid.**

**My journey to this stage today has been a remarkable yet improbable journey filled with many ups and downs, twists and turns, frustrations and triumphs, hurdles and obstacles too numerous to delineate in the time allotted me by my daughters. Graduates, the world into which you begin your journey of discovery is vastly different from the world that my generation stepped into. That voyage of discovery began for me and my generation at a very turbulent time in our nation's history when much was being challenged...**

- Americans challenged the assault on the environment.....The first Earth Day was observed in 1970 when I was a freshman in college.**
- Americans challenged our country's assault on the peoples of Southeast Asia.....I was still a freshman in May, 1970 when students protesting our country's incursion into Cambodia were killed by National Guardsmen on the campus of Kent State.**

- **Americans challenged the assault on the rights and civil liberties of minorities in this country.....I was a junior in college in 1972 when Andrew Young from Georgia and Barbara Jordan from Texas became the first blacks elected to Congress from the south since 1898.**

**The inner self that many of my generation discovered, within this turbulent context, came to understand and appreciate how interdependent we all were. We came to realize that our lives and our destinies were interwoven and intertwined. Many of my generation discovered a self that rejected many of the “isms” of the times.**

**We rejected....**

- **meism**
- **racism**
- **sexism**
- **and classism.**

**We saw how people used the strength and the resiliency of our institutions to begin to address really complex issues. I saw people helping others. I saw unselfish acts of kindness all around me. I saw people who cared enough to reach out and try to make a difference in the lives of others.**

**What an amazing thrill it is to help the needy. What a joy to see hope replace hopelessness. These are feelings you're going to have to experience for yourself, and I sincerely hope that you do. Because if you do, you will have made the world a better place and yourself a better human being. Please recognize that whatever you choose as a profession in life, there should be room in your heart as well as on your calendar to do something significant to help someone else. There's no shortage of people who need help. And helping is not a burden, nor will it become one.**

**I'm reminded of that whenever I hear a song on the radio that's one of my favorites. And yes, I know I'm showing my age when I say I listen to radio, as opposed to an iPod. Perhaps you've heard the song I have in mind. It was written by Sidney Russell and Robert Scott, and was a hit in 1969 for the Hollies and again in 1971 for Donny Hathaway. It's entitled "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother"**

**The lyrics of the song capture the essence of how many of us have come to think about extending a helping hand to our fellow citizens.**

**The lyrics read...**

**Life's " Road is long with many a winding turn that leads us to  
who knows where.**

**But I am strong enough to carry him, so on we go, for his  
welfare is my concern.**

**No burden is he to bear, we'll get there.**

**For I know he will not encumber me.**

**It's a long hard road, but while we're on our way to there, why  
not share? For the load doesn't weigh me down at all.**

**He ain't heavy, he's my brother.**

**Graduates, you will find such joy in using your genius to make  
a difference in the life of a poor child in need.**

**There is such satisfaction derived in reaching out to volunteer  
for a cause that will make life better for your fellow citizen.**

**You will be thrilled beyond compare when you can bring hope  
to the hopeless.**

**Graduates , you will have a more enriched life, a more  
rewarding life and a more gratifying life if you share your  
brilliance with others to make life better for your fellow human  
beings.**

**I will leave you with the most poignant verse from the Russell/Scott classic that stirs within me the greatest emotion...**

**“If I am laden at all, I’m laden with sadness that everyone’s heart isn’t filled with gladness and love for one another.**

**Graduates: Giving of your time, talent and treasure to help and give hope to the less fortunate will not be a burden. I promise you that it will enrich and enhance your lives.**

**So, again – congratulations on your marvelous achievement. I can't tell you how proud we all are of you. Thank you, Quinnipiac, for my honorary degree. Thank you for inviting me to speak here today.**

**And I know you will all thank me now for just sitting down.**

**Thank you very much, and God bless you all.**