



May 29, 2014

## President's Remarks

### 65th Commencement of the College of Staten Island

Good Morning, and welcome to the 65th Commencement of the College of Staten Island.

What do you think of the weather? Last year, we put in an order for a sunny cool day for Commencement; they got it half right and we baked in the hot sun. This year, it looks like someone finally heard our repeated request for both parts of the order.

And to the graduating Class of 2014—how are you feeling right now?

You made it—congratulations. We are so proud of all of you.

To the family, friends, and other loved ones here today, to our outstanding faculty and staff who have taught, mentored, challenged, and inspired you to reach the new heights of academic excellence, let's all give them a well-deserved round of applause.

Author and educator Stephen R. Covey once stated: "There are certain things that are fundamental to human fulfillment. The essence of these needs is captured in the phrase 'to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy'."

He then went on to describe the four basic needs. "The need to live is our physical need for such things as food, clothing, shelter, economical well-being, health. The need to love is our social need to relate to other people, to belong, to love, and to be loved. The need to learn is our mental need to develop and to grow. And the need to leave a legacy is our spiritual need to have a sense of meaning, purpose, personal congruence, and contribution."

I will be so bold as to say that the College of Staten Island has been fundamental to your personal journey to human fulfillment and has provided all four of these needs.

You have acquired the requisite knowledge and skills to enter the job market and eventually achieve your economic well-being. College graduates make 98% more an hour than those without a degree, between a half-million and a million dollars more over a lifetime. No matter your major, a degree from CSI means that you have learned to think critically, to write, to read and analyze, to comprehend basic mathematical functions, and to understand an increasingly diverse and multicultural workforce. These skills will allow you to succeed no matter where your path may lead and to enhance the communities in which you live.

You have loved and have been loved by your friends at CSI; you have become a part of a larger community.

You have grown and developed your intellectual minds; you have learned to learn.

And as graduates, you are now part of the proud legacy of the College of Staten Island and The City University of New York.

And what a legacy you, the graduating Class of 2014, have left behind.

You were at CSI when the Obama Administration announced a plan to assess schools on how well they serve their students, based on metrics like graduation rates, tuition cost, and the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants due to financial need. Just last month, Time magazine released its college rankings based upon these metrics, and out of 2,500 schools, CSI ranked 48th. You may have heard of some of the schools ranked below the College of Staten Island: Stanford, MIT, and University of California-Berkeley.

You were here when, also last month, Business Insider, the prominent business and technology Website, recently released its list of top schools in the country with great academics and high acceptance rates that challenge the myth that a college is necessarily better if it is more difficult to gain entrance. Indeed, the criteria of high-quality, accessible education is wholly consistent with the fundamental mission of The City University of New York. Only one school per state was chosen, and for New York, that school was the College of Staten Island. You may recognize some of the other prominent institutions on the list: the University of North Carolina, University of Pittsburgh, University of Maryland, American University, University of Connecticut, University of Delaware, and my alma mater, University of Montana.

You were here last year when the College of Staten Island was, for the first time, named as one of America's Best Northeast Public Colleges by U.S. News & World Report.

And you were here when in 2012, Washington Monthly magazine named CSI one of "America's Best-Bang-for-the-Buck Colleges."

You, the graduating Class of 2014, helped drive CSI's ascension to national prominence and recognition.

Please give yourselves a round of applause.

There are other firsts to applaud. You were here at CSI when we finished construction of Dolphin Cove, and some of you were even part of that first-ever group of students to live on campus.

You were here when, for the first time in our history, we became a doctoral-granting institution, offering Doctorates in Nursing and Physical Therapy.

You were here when we created our first professional schools; the School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Health Sciences.

You were here when our faculty reached new heights in research and scholarship--a nationally and globally respected faculty that can recently boast of three National Science Foundation career awardees, a Guggenheim Fellowship awardee, and a winner of the prestigious Frankel Prize from the Weiner Library of London.

You were here when the Staten Island community, New York City, New York State, and the nation stood up and took notice of our student excellence, exemplified by such stunning achievements as our first student recipient in 2011 of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the premiere federally funded undergraduate award in the sciences.

And you were here when Superstorm Sandy brought national attention and admiration for your courage and compassion in volunteering to help those in need in the aftermath.

No wonder Governor Cuomo, during a visit last year, called our campus “a jewel of the CUNY system.” You were here.

This is your great legacy.

And you are part of an even greater legacy that defines our College.

Former United States Senator Paul Tsongas once said that “We are a continuum. Just as we reach back to our ancestors for our fundamental values, so we, as guardians of that legacy, must reach ahead to our children and their children. And we do so with a sense of sacredness in that reaching.”

As we celebrate what you have been able to accomplish and what CSI has become, we also reach back and honor those in our history who set our path, beginning with the first class of 200 students from our predecessor institution Staten Island Community College in 1956, located at our original campus on 50 Bay Street in St. George. The first commencement was held in 1958 and the graduates could have also been your great grandparents.

We follow the continuum to the establishment of Richmond College, our two-year upper-division and graduate predecessor institution, in 1965—the first commencement was held in 1969 and the graduates could have been your grandparents.

To the merger of the two institutions in 1976, forming what we know now as the College of Staten Island—the first commencement was in 1977, and the graduates could have been your grandparents or your parents.

And then to the establishment of this beautiful 204-acre Willowbrook campus in 1993—the first commencement here on the Great Lawn was 20 years ago in May 1994, and again, the graduates could have been your parents.

Some of you graduating today will be the first in your family to earn a college degree, a family that dreamed and sacrificed for this day. Some of you have made it on your own, with little outside support and long days of work, sometimes supporting others in the process. All of you are part of the legacy that CSI honors and remembers.

And as graduates, it is now time for you to reach ahead and determine your own path to human fulfillment.

I encourage you to heed the sage advice of poet Robert Frost of his poem, The Road Not Taken. Please listen carefully and reflect as I read each verse:

*TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

You are now facing a similar divergence in life, a fork in the path. Not just two, but myriad paths stretch out before you. Many people think of Commencement as a conclusion, the end of hard years of work. However, it is really only a beginning. Think of your diploma as a license to learn and engage in lifelong learning.

Behind you is your legacy and ahead of you, your future. In the upcoming days, weeks, years, and decades you will find yourself at a divergence of paths. I urge you to consider your legacy, the wisdom and knowledge you have gained at the College of Staten Island, as you make your choice of the path to take. Why? Because that choice will make all the difference.

May your path lead you to making this a better, more compassionate and caring world.

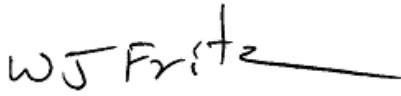
As guardians of the CSI legacy, never forget the inseparable bond that you have with the College. Always remember that should you need us, our faculty and staff who helped you reach this great milestone today, as well as your 61,000 fellow alumni, will always be there for you.

Face it, you are now Dolphins for life.

Congratulations, Class of 2014, on a job well-done.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "WJ Fritz" followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William J. Fritz, PhD  
President

