

To my fellow graduates of the Pittsburg State University class of 2009, to our families and friends, to our guests, and to the faculty, welcome to this very special day in all of our lives.

Today is the culmination of many years of work and personal growth. And today is also the product of many years of labor by those who have supported us. Selfishly, I am going to use this opportunity to thank those who have sacrificed the most so that I could be here with you this morning: my spouse, my mom, my sister, and my children, especially my oldest son, Thaddeus, who has spent countless hours entertaining his younger brother in order to give mom the chance to study. To all of you, and to all of the families and friends who have supported us over these last years, a profound and sincere thank you. This is your achievement as much as it is ours. In particular, I want to thank my father. He passed away in 2004, and therefore never got to see me graduate from college, but he was a sweet and wonderful man who taught me to love knowledge for its own sake. Although he himself never had the opportunity to go to college, he was a lifelong learner who surrounded himself with books, science projects, and nature. More than anyone else, this is for you, Dad.

So now, thanks to the love and support from our friends and family, we are finally leaving college and entering into the world as college graduates.

We are entering a world which is very different than it was even ten years ago. Our interconnectedness is astonishing. Thanks to tools like Facebook and Twitter, we are informed in real time, regardless of our level of interest, of the status of our friends. We know instantly where our connections are going on vacation, whether they procrastinated studying for finals, and more than we ever wanted to know about their complicated relationship statuses. We also have, and this might be the most important thing, 24/7 access to our student body president's favorite song lyrics.

To me, one of the best things about PSU is how very international it is, especially for being absolutely landlocked, with access to neither ocean nor interstate highway. Many of my very favorite people whom I have met as a student here are international students. It is a great thing to know that, no matter where they travel, be it Paraguay, Cyprus, India, or some points yet farther, technology will still connect our lives. I think that even after graduation we will stay connected with each other more than has ever happened in the past, despite being farther apart.

But the world is definitely changing. I suspect—but don't know—that the old answers, the old ways that we did things, are no longer going to be appropriate in a world that is becoming so, in the words of Thomas Friedman, "Hot, Flat, and Crowded." As we become more and more connected to each other, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the realities of life in the rest of the world, even if we never leave our little corner of Kansas. Like it or not, when we graduate, we will be expected to take our places not just as full members of American society but also of a world society. We *will* hear other languages and we *will* meet people whose beliefs are not ours. We will have to find a way to live together in a world which is, thanks to pressure from population increase and resource decrease, shrinking.

We will have to find a better way to share the global commons. By global commons I mean those resources, like fresh water, which cannot truly be said to belong to anyone, but rather are held in trust for all people. Like I said before, the old ways of doing business don't effectively take into account the impact that we have on the global commons. I think that, in our lifetime, we will be responsible for making this change.

But I think that we can probably put off this great work at least until Monday. Today is a day for celebration, a day when we can comfortably rest on our laurels. All of us have accomplished a great thing in earning our place here today, and to all of us who are members of

the 2009 graduating class of Pittsburg State University I say, congratulations! Congratulations.

To all of you I wish the very greatest success.

Thank you.