Thank you President Bowman and good afternoon trustees, students, faculty, parents, alumni, friends, and loved ones.

I am pleased to address the graduating class of 2008 from the College of Applied Science and Technology.

*Let me wish all mothers in the audience a Happy Mother’s Day!*

Let me begin by offer this bit of wisdom for you graduates--If at first you don’t succeed, do it like your mother told you.

And to the fathers and mothers in the audience—these words from Erma Bombeck to you—“Graduation day is tough for adults. They go to the ceremony as parents. They come home as contemporaries. After twenty-two years of child-raising, they are unemployed.”
This sesquicentennial year at ISU has been remarkable. We welcomed to campus David McCullough an author and historian, Robert Kennedy Jr., who spoke about environmental issues, Robert Ballard, an explorer and oceanographer who re-discovered the Titanic, Doris Kearns Goodwin and Ken Burns, each known for their best selling biographical work of historic notables, Ray Kurzweil, a technologist and futurist, Ralph Nader, a social activist, and most recently Charlie Trotter, an author, chef, philanthropist, and entrepreneur. We learned much from each speaker, each with a different message but there were similarities.

The message I gleaned from each of these extraordinary speakers can be summed up this way. Each was absolutely committed to excellence. Each was driven to perform at levels above and beyond that of their peers. The literally out-thought and out-performed others in their respective fields.

My challenge to you as you leave your beloved ISU is to set high standards for yourself. Embrace the message that Ballard and Goodwin and Trotter and McCullough gave us. Don’t settle for anything less than the absolute best in whatever path you choose. Live a life that is defined by excellence.

You have been equipped well during the last 4, 5 or 6 years. You have studied with some of the best academicians in the world. I know, I work with them every day and I see what they do, how they teach and how they conduct
research. You have an education that is second to none and no one can take that from you. Take advantage of it, use it, and continue it. It will serve you, your families, and our communities very well.


I want to use this opportunity to give each of you one last assignment. Consider it a final if you want. It is a take home exam and will be self graded, pass or fail. Your assignment is to take what you have gained at ISU and put it to use. Put your education to use in teaching others. Make new discoveries. Be at the fore in advancing and finding ways to utilize nano technology, green construction, sustainable food and fiber production. Invent new ways to recreate and to share knowledge safely and securely through networking and telecommunications. Use your creativity to develop new fabrics or design new clothing or to explore the ill effects of crime on society. And for some, you will become a leader in the armed forces of this country. To you I say be safe.

Allow me to quote to quote the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, “Do you want to know who you are? Don’t ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you.”

Your assignment then is to define yourself! Will you be a leader in applying what you have learned? You are now the person in charge of your

Lastly, before you leave Redbird Arena this day, breathe in the rarified air of this institution and sneak one last look at those dressed in academic regalia. They are very proud of you and will miss you. Remember what they have given you. They pushed you and motivated you. Your professors have provided you with the tools to think critically and to put into action your best thoughts. Your professors have given much and their reward is to see you define yourself and be successful. If you haven’t already done so, take time to thank them and stay in touch with us.

It’s fun to reminisce and to think about how far we have come. But today is your day, a day to contemplate your future. The discoveries of tomorrow will be yours. You will explore space and the oceans. Contrary to what many believe, there are many new discoveries awaiting you.

I have seen you perform academically in and outside the classroom. I have witnessed your humanistic and civic response to enormous tragedies and simple moments. I have witnessed you building homes for the needy and reading to first grade children. Graduates, you are ready to take on life’s challenges, and they will be plentiful and complex.
Your generation will be called upon to understand and solved the world’s most perplexing dilemmas that have ever faced humankind. These issues will likely include issues of human health and hunger, global warming, and terrorism abroad and at home.

You have been well equipped for the challenges. You have been educated broadly in general education and have been taught core and advanced knowledge in your discipline. Further, you have been taught critical thinking skills, argumentation, and problem solving. You are among a minority of the world’s population that holds a college degree and I am confident that you know how to use it.

Take with you a spirit of innovation and the character to persevere in the pursuit of knowledge. Today you join over 37,000 graduates of this College who make valuable contributions every day to industries, agencies, and communities.

Live a life that is defined by excellence. Define yourself through action, create your future and be successful. Good luck! Congratulations graduates!