

Good evening.

Firstly, and this is the most important message I have for you tonight, CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE ROCK STARS, EACH and every one of you. Congratulations to each graduate, their families and friends. I hope you are able to savor this BIG life event. My husband and I have this goofy rescue German Shepherd Dog, Axel, who has one of the world's greatest and most enthusiastic 'happy dances' Not only does he run and jump for joy, he TWIRLS around and around and it's very impressive with his giant tail banging on everything that comes in its path. It is joy incarnate. I want you to know in my heart I'm doing the Axel Happy Dance for you this weekend. Congratulations, again.

Next, I'd like to thank Dean Evans and his staff for asking me to speak tonight and for the kind introduction. This is quite an honor and a humbling and somewhat terrifying experience. I've been struggling with what to say to you graduates that are "commencing" from school to work in this economy and what to say to the faculty and staff, all of whom are individually much smarter than me. I've seen one writer call the economic state of affairs a "repression," more serious than a recession but not quite a depression. No matter what it is called, this meltdown is a scary time for all of us. When you graduates started at Price College, this wasn't what you signed up for, was it? Unfortunately, this is part of the lessons of life, which you probably already know...It's very rare for things to go as planned and you have to be flexible. This week I saw an ad that said "that which does not kill you only makes you stronger...a good attitude is key in times like these. Focus on what you can do and do it." The person that wrote the copy put it very clearly. I know in my own career, which most people regard at least as moderately successful, that there have been quite a few "down" experiences, both from an economic as well as personal view. I was once asked to resign from a position. I did and found myself without a job. However, I had been in a miserable situation and I ended up in a much better environment. However, at the time it was pretty devastating. I learned from those experiences and became a better worker and person because of it. Your generation is known for creativity and innovation. This challenging period is a perfect time to put that into use. World economics are changing and headed into uncharted areas; however, I believe some fundamental practical ways of conducting yourself in business will still hold true.

I want to share some information with you. This year I have been involved on a College Task Force on Professional Development. The Task Force has made some suggestions for curriculum additions that would address nontechnical skills needed by graduates to be professionally successful. As part of the Task Force work, questions were posed to recent graduates, recruiters and faculty to determine areas needing improvement for Price College graduates in a nontechnical arena. I think you might be interested in hearing some of these things. Please forgive me while I list a few of them.

Some of the common themes between all the parties of what graduates need to improve were:

- How to navigate corporate or office politics

- Team skills

- Microsoft Office Skills, particularly Excel

- Understanding that you have to start at the bottom

Some of the common themes on the student's lists were:

Better research and note-taking skills

How to make allies out of your supervisor

Knowing you need to be professional at all times

The employers' list was the longest and included:

Leadership skills in new hires

New graduates need to know college is over. Certain behavior isn't acceptable anymore.

Have realistic career expectations

Arrive to work on time and meet deadlines

Think outside of the box

Be a self-starter

Know professional etiquette and dress professionally

Understand financial statements

Know your own strengths and weaknesses

In 5 minutes I cannot "teach" how to understand and analyze financial statements or all the many wonders of Excel. I wish I could magically wave a wand and you would have all these skills. Hopefully sharing this list with you now puts you ahead of the game. Since I don't have any fairy dust, I want to share five points commenting on a few of these items and behaviors based on my personal experiences.

Number one.

Pay Attention and be aware.

Pay attention to your co-workers. Observe the successful people at your new job. (Give yourself a little time to figure out who they are. They may not be the ones you think they are at first.

The people that are successful are likely going to be the ones that get to work early, work hard and they work smart as well. They don't spend their time spinning their wheels because they are focused on what they are doing.

Also pay attention to how those successful people dress and how they conduct their business. Chances are they look "professional" and do what it takes to meet deadlines and help others meet theirs as well. They are likely good at technology but don't spend all their time on technology to the detriment of face-to-face encounters. They are probably friendly and compassionate and admit when they are in error and go about fixing it quickly. Likely they are honest and ethical

just like you've been urged to be in your classes at Price College. And quite frankly, if they are not honest and ethical, start looking for somewhere else to go. I've been blessed in my career that I've worked with fine people who worked hard to be on the "up and up."

Be self aware. Don't be oblivious. When you start a new job you may not know what you're doing. If you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it. When you are starting your career, you do have a honeymoon period. It's pretty short but you should use the time to get grounded. Ask for feedback when you turn work in. Take criticism to heart, especially when it's fair and don't make the same mistakes twice. . Ask questions. It is expected and appreciated.

I've talked about paying attention to your co-workers and yourself. Also, be aware of what's going on in the world around you. Read. You need to be up to date on what's happening in the world. Your bosses will be and you want to make a good impression on how smooth you are. Know what's going on in world, national and state politics. Know what's happening in local sports. Not just OU, but the Thunder, or the Mavs or the Dallas Cowboys or Houston Texans and even those Teams that Wear Orange...some of you may not care that much about sports but in this part of the country it is what people talk about. You'll want to be part of the conversation.

Be situationally aware. If you're not getting your boss' attention because he's distracted, ask when would be a good time to come back. Know when it is time to leave or when it is ok to stay. Look for body language and facial expressions.

Listen. That's a huge part of awareness...when you listen, you can also pick up on how to navigate office politics. People like to talk to good listeners. You also may be getting a lot of your instructions verbally. If you don't learn orally but learn visually, ask if you can get instructions in writing or if not, write it down yourself and repeat it back to make sure you got it right.

Number two.

Be passionate about what you do and develop a keen sense of humor. . That's pretty funny coming from an accountant, I know. But people respond to people that are excited about what they do and they always like to laugh. .

I've spent a significant part of my career working with engineers and geologists and showing them how what they do translates into financial statements and performance metrics. Nothing pleases me more than to see the technical guys and girls "get it." Those technical people have responded to that enthusiasm and that has opened all sorts of doors for me.

I was recently flying somewhere and when I wasn't checking out the other passengers for swine flu symptoms I flipped through some magazines I normally would never see. One of those magazines quoted an 80-year old self-help guru who said she had learned the secret of working. If it didn't give her joy, she simply refused to do something. Although I won't pretend I enjoy everything about my work or that you will, I do know that if you don't love what you are doing, you will be miserable. That is an important concept to keep in mind. Find something to be passionate about.

I work with a younger group of people now and they are very focused on creating a great new company; however, we take time to laugh every day whether it be about outrageous horoscopes or for the Longhorns to laugh at my pen that plays “Boomer Sooner.”

Number three.

Be Tenacious and Persistent. When you want something, stay after it. That’s not just about being stubborn, but keeping after your goals even when things aren’t going like you “signed up for.” I believe the old adage that hard work pays off, but sometimes it takes longer than we like. Certainly in this economy things will take longer than they did in the recent past, but keep at it and don’t give up.

The company I used to work for was acquired by a larger company in September. There were four in my group that were asked to stay on for six months’ transition. That worked out fine for two of us since we went straight to new positions. The other two now find themselves looking for jobs in this free-falling economy. One of them went to job fairs, worked at interviewing and has already found a temporary position with a firm. Being a temp is not really what she wants but she’ll win them over I’m feel certain. The other one, who has better technical skills by far, has been waiting for head-hunters to find her something and has developed a passive attitude. She still doesn’t have a job and I’m quite concerned about her because her attitude is not going to work in this economy.

Number four.

Be Patient. Success isn’t going to come overnight. OU and the Price College have provided you a fabulous foundation. You are so much better prepared than we who graduated thirty years ago. But more importantly, you are better prepared than a lot of your competition. Think about the Integrated Business Core, the Student Investment Fund, the Tax Competition and Study Abroad programs. If you didn’t participate in those options think about the team projects you’ve done and your internships. You have been provided a great base, a terrific foundation. Now it’s time to start on the walls, the roof and the furniture of your life. Every person has unique skills, talents and facets. You just need to figure out how to pull out those skills and talents to align to the job at hand. Be patient. It’s a grand journey and I wish you the best.

Number five. Last but not least.

Remember this place. Give back to it through your time and yes, your pocket book. I love the University. I came to Norman to go to school when I was 17 and didn’t leave for 28 years. When I started in public accounting, we were gently encouraged to contribute to our alma maters. The money was matched dollar for dollar. Over the years the amounts have grown and so has the need. Early on I was asked to be on an alumni board and I met some fabulous people. Twice I’ve started intern programs. Those have provided great employees and friends. I’ve gotten back more than I give. When I moved to Texas I created a shrine to OU in a corner of my office. It’s generally the first thing people comment on when they walk in. They know where I’m from and that I’m proud of it. When I started working in Dallas, there was only one other OU graduate at my company. When we were sold, we were up to eight full-time employees and had had six interns at different times in a variety of different disciplines. It just took a little nudge to get Human Resources to recruit here at OU and, of course, they were treated well and

kept coming back. Making OU more visible didn't take that much effort. You should come back here, too. Whether it's in a recruiting mode or whether it's to help mentor students or donating to a project that needs some alumni help... you can keep making this a better place for the next generation.

Thanks for your attention and congratulations and good luck to you, the University of Oklahoma- Price College of Business- Rock Stars.