Thank you, Andrew, for that very generous introduction. I deeply appreciate it. And thank you, members of the senior class, for the invitation to speak to you on behalf of my faculty colleagues, who have assembled here to congratulate you – the Class of 2011:

*You sure picked a great time to be at Butler University!*  

I'm not going to try to enumerate all the steps that have brought you to this day, and I'm certainly not going to try to predict the steps that lie ahead for you, but I do ask you to let me play the professor one last time and point out that the word *graduation* comes from the Latin word *gradus*, which means *step*. So as you step up onto the stage in a few minutes and walk a few paces in view of the crowd, you will indeed be graduating— taking a step, a new step, into a new world.

Now if my little Latin lesson strikes you as pretty impractical—something you could spend a happy day without knowing about — just think about how impractical the whole of this Graduation Day is. First of all, these robes and
crazy hats— I mean, what's the point? And they cost you money. Of course you get to keep the outfit; I'm sure you're really pleased about that. But your family and friends don't even get a tassel, and to watch you graduate they're going to watch 848 other people graduate, most of whom are strangers to them. It really would be easier if we did graduation some other way. I mean, we could text you your degree; or if that seems a little too slimmed down, we could do graduation on Skype.

Of course, the reason we're doing what we're doing today is obvious when you stop and think about it. Today is not just a day for degree-granting, nor even just a day for saying congratulations. Today is a *celebration*; it's a party, and for a party we need to get together, we need each other's flesh-and-blood presence. We need each other's spiritual proximity, too—call it friendship if you like. On Graduation Day we need to be together.

Now I realize that talking about togetherness can get pretty sentimental pretty fast. Still, I do believe that working together as a mutually supportive team or community really is something that distinguishes Butler University; or to put it more precisely, it is something which you, your student generation, has clarified for Butler University in remarkable ways in the last
four years. When we think of disciplined teams of Butler students, of course, our thoughts turn first to the athletic programs which have represented us so splendidly, and in several different sports. But I've got other teams on my mind as well.

For example, there's the team led by members of your class who brought us Shakespeare's *As You Like It* this past February, and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in December, and Shakespeare's *Tempest* just last month. Three Shakespeare productions in five months: now that is serious teamwork. And then there's the 109-member, ever-beautiful team we call Butler Ballet, which brought us Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* two weeks ago, and *Swan Lake* last April, and *Cinderella* the April before that, and *Giselle* the April before that. And there's the 81-member Butler Symphony Orchestra, which took on the formidable challenge of presenting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony this past February— and if you're fuzzy about who Shostakovich was, just ask one of these Bulldogs down here in the orchestra pit: I'm sure they'll clear it up for you.

And then there are the teams who served the underserved, such as the medical brigades of Butler's Timmy Foundation chapter who traveled a
couple thousand miles from our campus to help bring decent health care to a community in Guatemala, and the Pharmacy and Health Sciences students who traveled a few thousand yards from our campus to help bring decent health care to communities in Indianapolis. And think of Program Board's spectacular Dance Marathon that raised a record-setting $100,000 for the children at Riley Hospital.

This is just a small sample of the things you and your classmates have been doing together for the past four years. But this is Graduation Day. This is a day when, like the Roman god Janus, you have to wear two faces at the same time: the face that looks back to where you've just been, and the face that looks forward to where you're now going. Many of you don't yet know just where that is, and to be perfectly honest, even those of you who know where you're going next don't really know what that route holds in store for you. But remember, the values that got you this far—hard work, quality work, teamwork and friendship-- are the same values that will take you further. You've done great things together for the last four years, and we all feel a twinge at the thought that those years are now over. But here's the good news: the last four years are not your final four. You can go on doing what
you've been doing, only in new contexts, as members of new teams, and
doing it even better.

Some of you are joining Indianapolis Public Schools or other school
systems—a truly patriotic career-choice for citizens of a democratic
republic, since a democracy without an effective system of universal
education is on its way to becoming something other than a democracy.
And some of you will be putting your intellect and team-spirit to work in the
financial and commercial sectors, helping to incubate and accelerate the
kinds of enterprises on which the prosperity, and very likely also the peace,
of our country will depend. And speaking of peace, at least two of you are
joining the team we call the United States Peace Corps, and one of you has
just received his commission as an officer in the United States Air Force,
and one of you will be soon be joining the Kroc Institute for International
Peace Studies, the most distinguished institution of its kind in America. And
speaking of America, several of you are joining AmeriCorps or Teach for
America to help build stronger communities here at home.

And then there are those highly specialized teams to which some of you
have been recruited, such as the graduate Department of Physics at the
University of Michigan, and at Washington University and at Ohio State; and the graduate Department of Chemistry at the University of Chicago, and at Wisconsin and at Pitt and at Notre Dame, not to mention a lot of other fine graduate programs in these and other disciplines.

Of course none of this has happened yet. It starts tomorrow, while today is still today—Graduation Day. In today's celebration, however, you have a precious resource which you can put to work tomorrow and the next day and the day after that. Let me sum it up in the words of a really wise person, Master Kung, a teacher from the ancient Chinese state of Lu, the person we call Confucius. In a lovely passage of the Analects, one of Confucius' friends asks him about the meaning of "togetherness," and Confucius replies: "Live every day as if you were attending a great ceremony. Treat everyone as if you were receiving an important guest."\(^1\) It's a beautiful thought: let this special day, this impractical ceremonial Graduation Day, serve as a reminder to treat every day as a special day; let it serve as a reminder to greet every morning as a special morning, as a time for a new step, a fresh idea, a chance to do something that hasn't been done before, a chance to acknowledge someone you haven't acknowledged before.

---
\(^1\) My paraphrase of Analects 12.2.
So remember Graduation Day: remember the smiles on a thousand faces, the pride in your parents' hearts, the tears in your friends' eyes and the love all around you. Remember these things, and tell yourself, "I'm going to look for them every day." You'll make the world a better place by doing that, and you'll find yourself empowered to cope with winter and rough weather. And while you're at it, while you're using the gifts which are yours, remember also to thank the Giver. And may the Giver of every good and perfect gift speed you on your way.

Congratulations again, and thanks for listening.