

AMBASSADOR DAVID F. GIRARD-DICARLO'S REMARKS AT DREXEL UNIVERSITY

As delivered June 12, 2010 at the

Bennett S. Lebow College of Business 2010 Commencement Ceremony

President Pennoni, Dean Tsetsekos - Thank you for the kind introduction. And thank you for this wonderful honor. I am very humbled and grateful.

Before I offer some brief remarks, I congratulate each of you graduating today in the Class of 2010 and your families and friends, as well. This is an exciting day for everyone and I am honored to be sharing it with you.

It is exactly 40 years since I graduated from college and I am keenly aware of how much has changed during that 40 year period. In 1970, there was no voicemail, there were no cell phones, and there were no personal computers – all things we take for granted today. I am an attorney. When we made copies of documents in the 1970s, we used photocopy machines and carbon tissue paper. When we edited documents, we did so with scotch tape and scissors - not with a point and click on a computer. Moreover, in 1970, there was no World Wide Web and we were not in the truly interconnected, global world we live in today.

With those thoughts as a backdrop, here are three suggestions for you to consider – now that you have completed an important and critical milestone in your life's journey and now that you are embarking on your careers.

First:

ALWAYS BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS!

Insular thinking builds walls and limits aspirations. History offers countless examples of very talented people limiting their opportunities for the future because they applied yesterday's logic or even the popular logic of the period. A few examples:

- A 1910 edition of Scientific American proclaimed: "To affirm that the aeroplane is going to revolutionize naval warfare is to be guilty of the wildest exaggeration.";
- In 1943, Thomas Watson, then Chairman of IBM, said he believed there was a world market for only about five computers;
- In 1991, the Executive Vice President of CBS told a Congressional Committee that digital television "defies the laws of physics."

These examples demonstrate that what is or what was does not always prepare us for what will be.

Second:

ALWAYS BE CONFIDENT AND PURSUE YOUR DREAMS WITH PASSION!

Despite the challenging economic times that our nation is undergoing and despite the challenging world economy – do not despair. Drexel is a unique and special university and has prepared you well for whatever will occur in the future. Throughout history, economies have been cyclical. It is up to you to decide whether the glass is half empty or half full.

It has been said that even an optimist sometimes thinks that the future is uncertain. To be sure, there is some truth to that. To the weak and timid, uncertainty is nothing more than a chance to fail. But for those nimble enough to adapt to changing times and bold enough to take advantage of whatever the future brings, uncertainty is just an uncharted path to unlimited possibilities. Maintaining your confidence will enable you to find your path. And pursuing your dreams with passion will enable you to achieve unlimited possibilities.

Let me offer a few examples of people who were confident and who pursued their passion and their beliefs despite the naysayers:

- This “telephone” has no value to us because it has too many shortcomings to be considered seriously – stated a Western Union internal memo in 1876 in response to Alexander Bell’s new invention.
- A Yale University management professor said to Fred Smith: “Your concept is interesting but, in order to earn more than a “C”, the idea must be feasible.” Fred Smith went on to found FedEx with that idea.
- “We don’t like their sound and guitar music is on the way out”, said a Decca Recordings Company top manager in rejecting The Beatles in 1962.

And my favorite:

- Two college students went to Atari and said: “We’ve got this amazing thing and we built it with some of your materials. Will you fund us or let us come to work for you?” Atari said no. The two students then went to Hewlett-Packard and HP said, “Hey, we don’t need you and you haven’t even finished college.”

These were rejections to Steve Jobs regarding the personal computer he and Steve Wozniak were building - and they, of course, went on to found Apple Computer and change the way many of us live and work.

My third and final suggestion:

THINK GLOBAL AND STRIVE TO BE WORLD CLASS!

Think and act as a cosmopolitan person. Do not retreat to nativism or regionalism. Do not become an isolationist.

As you strive to be world class, I urge you not to focus on the word “world” – we all know what that means - but focus instead on the concept of “class.” And in this context, what does “class” mean?

The best answer that I have ever found to what comprises “class” comes from Howard Ferguson, author of The Edge:

- People with class never run scared. They are sure footed and confident in the knowledge that you can meet life head on and handle whatever comes along.
- People with class never make excuses. They take their lumps and learn from past mistakes.
- People with class are considerate of others. They know good manners are nothing more than a series of petty sacrifices. Good manners and class bespeak an aristocracy that has nothing to do with ancestors or money.
- People with class never try to build themselves up by tearing others down. People with class are already up and they need not strive to look better by making others look worse.
- People with class can ‘walk with kings and keep their virtue, and talk with crowds and keep the common touch.’ Everyone is comfortable with the person who has class – because that person is comfortable with him or her self.
- Finally, if you have class, you don’t need much else. If you don’t have it, no matter what else you have – it doesn’t make much difference.

You are fortunate to have attended a great university led by people who have class and who have built a world class institution. If you will use them as your role models, you are guaranteed to be successful – not only in business but, more importantly, in life.

Thank you very much and good luck!