

Student Lasallian Commencement Address  
May 2010  
Presented by: Brittany DiPietro

Good afternoon members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, families, and friends. Thank you all for coming to celebrate the hard work, accomplishments, and perseverance of the class of 2010. Graduates, today is truly a defining moment in our lives.

Saint John Baptist De La Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers, dedicated his life to serving others. He saw a problem with the education system in France over 300 years ago and set out to fix it. His desire to take initiative on something that caught his interest is something I feel that we can all incorporate into our daily lives. An old English proverb advises do not lie in a ditch, and say “God help me”; use the lawful tools He has lent you.

When I first came to Lewis, I was a nursing major. I thought I wanted to be a nurse because I enjoyed helping people. On my first day of classes, while sitting in my organic chemistry class, I suddenly got this gut feeling that this was not what I was supposed to be doing with my life. And no, it was not because of the intimidating first day of school. I had this feeling that God wanted me to do something different with my life. It was at that point that I realized that mathematics was my true passion and that I should pursue my passion. Thankfully, God has lent me the analytical mind to succeed in chosen field. My decision to switch majors on my first day of classes may have seemed hasty to some people but I knew that God had different plans for me.

My desire to take initiative and pursue my passions has led to many great experiences in my last four years. It has led me to opportunities to conduct research in mathematics. It has led me to explore other academic areas that I had never previously considered, such as economics and computer science. These experiences fueled my aspiration to further my education in graduate school. Outside of academia, my willingness to follow my passions has also led me to grow in my faith life in these past four years.

My faith life is extremely important to me but I wasn't involved in activities in my home parish. I took the opportunity of being at a Catholic university to strengthen my faith and to share my faith with others. Becoming involved in University Ministry activities, specifically Peer Ministry helped me to gain a deeper understanding of my faith. I believe that the willingness to follow my heart has led to the development of my Lasallian character.

The Lasallian values of knowledge, wisdom, fidelity, association, and justice characterize the spirit of Lewis University. Among these, I believe that association played the biggest role in my education experience at Lewis University. Association, as it relates to the Lewis Mission, basically means that all faculty and staff want students to be successful and we all work together toward that end. I ask each one of you to reflect right now on your own undergraduate education. Think of your academic successes, struggles, achievements, and even failures. Think of the hours studied for difficult exams, the nights spent trying to decipher homework that you've had for a week but didn't look at until the night before it's due. Think of those times where you were typing out the last 3 sentences at 9:55 for your paper that was due at 10.

Now think of the people along the way that helped you achieve today's academic victory. I know that I have many people to thank for getting me to this place today, but I am especially thankful for the wisdom, support, and guidance of two specific professors, Dr. Berger and Dr. Klump of the Math/Computer Science Department. When I first told these professors that I was interested in doing research, they were willing to help me in whatever way possible. They wrote me countless letters of recommendation and assured me that I had the ability to succeed. These professors truly exemplified the spirit of association at Lewis University. Over my time at Lewis, they became more than excellent teachers... they became mentors whom I felt I could go to for advice, guidance, and help. And those questions on homework the night before the assignment was due? Sometimes, they would email me back with a helpful hint. Sometimes it was a suggestion for me to come and see them first thing in the morning.

Who were the faculty that made an impact on your experience at Lewis? These faculty members molded our minds and shaped our futures. Therefore, I speak on behalf of these graduates when I

say thank you, professors. Thank you for taking an interest in us as individuals. For caring about our success. For believing in us when we may have doubted our own abilities. For pushing us to fulfill our potential. For inspiring us to think outside of the box.

Graduates, as you enter the next stage in your lives, I encourage you to carry this spirit of association with you. Lewis has fostered in us the values of commitment, dedication, and community. With these ideals, we enter a completely new world of challenges. From these challenges emerge opportunities to succeed through collaboration for a common good.

Congratulations, May Class of 2010!