

**Eastern Illinois University
Commencement Speech
December 19, 2009**

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Thank you, Dr. Perry

Distinguished Faculty and Administrators

Family Members

Special Guests

and Members of the Graduating Class.

It is an honor to be here at Eastern Illinois University. A special place that has been with me since graduating in 1974. And a special place that will always be where my professional journey began.

It wasn't that long ago in Klehm Hall, that the assignment was given. It was the first class in my major with Dr. Strandberg. The topic assigned was from a list of topics included on the course syllabus. It was due in four weeks. Plenty of time it seemed... four weeks.

Things got very busy – intramurals, dances, dorm activities, new dates. That paper was still due – Plenty of time it seemed ... two weeks.

Three tests were scheduled in one week, the same week the paper was due. It was OK to meet friends at Marty's and then Ikes. Plenty of time for the paper it seemed, it was due the day after tomorrow. It was a long day and a long night. I was glad to get the paper done. The paper was good enough... it seemed.

The following week, Dr. Strandberg announced he would hand back the papers. He wanted to see me before the afternoon lab class.

He was in front of his IBM selectric typewriter, and paused to acknowledge me. After the last carriage return, he turned and asked what I had in mind for the future. I said, completing my degree at Eastern. He took out my paper marked with a C+ and said, "I have seen what you are capable of in class and lab, and I expected more from you".

In subsequent classes with Dr. Strandberg, and in others, I knew what I needed to do. A significant course correction in my efforts occurred.

Dr. Strandberg does not remember our brief conversation, but this simple statement has resonated for years ... "I expected more from you." ... "I expected more from you."

Expectations are all around us. Corporations spend billions of dollars in brand recognition - and the expected, predictable product. One of the Holiday Inn ad campaigns promoted, "the best surprise is no surprise." McDonalds prides itself on how you can expect consistency from location to location.

Yet, as we progress in life, early expectations define and refine our lives. You are here today because of the expectations of the many around you, and the growing of your own expectations. If, as they say, a person's soul is a mirror that reflects those that have impacted a person, then expectations serve as a compass that indicates the course for continuing progress. There are no lane markers in the ocean of life.

With greater precision, the newer technology of a GPS also indicates direction. When navigating to a destination on the water, waypoints along the way provide short segments of the journey. Rather than one long course that would result in a collision with hazards above or below the water, these sequenced destinations within a journey help to avoid hazards, and when added together, form the course that allows safe passage.

Expectations like waypoints along the journey help mitigate the pitfalls of life that would compromise your progress toward achievement.

We all have chosen diversions to routine daily activities. I am a runner. Having participated in several running events, you are always faced with your own expected finish times and place. In recent years, I am more concerned with finishing.

However, a very competitive colleague once was sharing advice on racing strategy. He said, “When trying to pass a runner, look him in the eye, and tell him it looks like you are favoring your right leg.” And, for those of you familiar with battling the voice in your head, of course this observation would cause a concern, maybe cause a change in stride, and ultimately a distraction of the expectation of a possible injury.

More seriously, a negative expectation can also be the venom that tramples esteem and poisons optimism. We have all been in a situation where a child is told, “You will never amount to anything”, or “You’re always in trouble.”

Sadly, many fulfill this expectation with underachievement. Or, worse, the prisons are filled with many fulfilling their expected behavior.

Leaders use expectations to complete a mission, release a product on time, and mentor a colleague or subordinate. Leaders speak of the promise of tomorrow by building on the achievements of yesterday.

Jack Nicklaus in his book, *My Story* addresses this by stating, “Achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one's levels of aspiration ... and expectation.”

Leaders expect good things to happen in the face of adversity. Even in the roughest seas, the captain must demonstrate that all is well and in control. For the crew, this confidence, leads to the expectation of safe, smoother water ahead. The crew then acts calmly and deliberately with the tasks needed to reach the destination.

Some people just seem to have success come their way. This may appear to be true, but it is not coincidence. And, there are thousands of books written on career success. Many of you have experienced mentoring in the workplace.

Again, I was fortunate to have some basic expectations shared with me years ago by a leader in the company.

So now, you may be finished with classes, but this would be a good time for taking notes ...

Walk with a purpose ... demonstrate urgency in all tasks

Always carry a sheet of paper or clipboard and pen ... Regardless of what you are doing, your efforts will look important ... be prepared and look prepared

Remember to say please and thank you, and do not sit down until asked.

Keep your shoes shined. I was once told that you can tell a lot about a person by how they take care of their shoes ... it is true.

Know that permanent pressed is largely overrated ... iron your clothes.

No matter how bad things are, they will continue to be bad without first an expectation that it will improve ... Seize challenges with plans to address any hurdles ...

You are here today, because in the continuum of events in your life, the collective expectations of those around you, have guided you. Parents and grandparents, brothers, sisters, extended family, friends, teachers, coaches, professors, supervisors, and your own expectations, have helped you to achieve your goal. Each of these expectations, like waypoints, has provided a series of destinations that together have culminated in the course you are on.

Now, as stated in Luke 12:48, “To whom much is given, much is expected”. And, much has been given to you at Eastern.

Your responsibility now, is to embark on new opportunities, and build your life with your own expectations.

Apply your new knowledge and skills to help humanity with quality in all tasks

Serve as an example to others.

And, as new alumni, support EIU efforts.

And, finally, know that the many here today ... sitting behind you, and those in spirit

And those on the stage in front of you

Join with you today in celebrating your achievement, and expecting more from you in the future

We expect more from you in the future

We expect more from you in the future ...

Thank you.
