

Scholarship Acceptance Speech

Good morning:

I am incredibly honored to be here with you this morning. Thank you very much for once again having me at one of your breakfast meetings! I am also exceedingly honored to have with me my grandmother, mother, and father this morning.

First, I am particularly appreciative of the Rotary Club for selecting me as a recipient of your scholarship. I feel very privileged and touched to receive your support in my post-secondary endeavors. It is such an amazing emotion for me personally to know that there are always these networks of support out there assisting students in their educational pursuits. So many students feel hopeless at the thought of not being able to afford a college education, and many give up looking for sources of assistance before their senior years even start. Therefore, I am incredibly grateful to the Rotary Club for falsifying this mystery, for letting students around the county know that if they want to pursue a higher education, rarely will financial matters hold them back. Your investment in the future is a great asset for our world. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support in my and my colleague's educational adventures.

As you might already know, tonight is my commencement ceremony. So, I am standing here before you with mixed emotions. For the past 4 years, I have dreamed of this very night, and yet right now, when I am at the threshold of something new and exciting, I find myself experiencing a completely different set of emotions—one that does not discard my previous sensations, but integrates new and unexpected sentiments. I cannot believe that I am graduating from high school tonight when I look back and vaguely remember myself at around 3 or 4 years old or so running around the house without clothes, with a plastic sword in my hand, proclaiming with my brother that I was the Emperor. I still remember those good old days when I played with bricks, water, dirt, fire, wax, or a combination of the aforementioned elements at the front door. Now, I know that I cannot play the 'when I was young' card because I am still a teenager, but when I was young, I did not play with these foreign technological gadgets like computers or laptops. I did not even know of this new invention called the Internet. I still recollect that the idea of a printer was new to me when I was 10 years old. Before that, I was trained to do a simple form of calligraphy using a fountain pen that I needed to dip into an ink bottle sitting nearby every hour or so. Every day, going home, I was interrogated by my mother as to the cause of ink all over my hands, sometimes on my face, and occasionally on my white collar-shirt uniform. I still recall that time when I spilled sulfuric acid on my foot, or when I almost burned my hand playing with hot glue, which still happens very often today sadly, or that time when I put a thermometer in a rice-cooker to test the expansion of mercury, which, I have to say, was not one of my smartest moments. I might still have some mercury poison from that stupidity. Along with other friends of mine, I still remember when I was promoted to the title of model student in 3rd or 4th grade, earned a red necktie as a result, and charged with the responsibility of reminding other students of appropriate behaviors during recess. Afterwards, I always forgot about my obligation of wearing the necktie, and my responsibility of reminding other students because I always seized the opportunity during recess to buy and eat noodles instead. Eventually, I sadly lost my title. And yet, I am standing

here before you, about to be a proud Class of 2012 graduate. Looking back, everything seems to be going so quickly.

When I started my first full year of school in America in 6th grade with fear and anxiety as I was completely aware of the expectations placed upon me. I did not speak, write, read, or understand any English at all during the first few years in America. Most of the time, a smile was the only answer I could give because the question posed before me was never processed in my brain; all I heard was gibberish—nothing comprehensible. At that time, I was not able to even form a complete sentence. I could not ask a question to save my life. So much was said, but so little was processed or retained. I remember one time, I dressed up as Charlemagne in 7th grade for a history project, delivered a brilliantly-written speech, performed an amazing imitation of the Emperor, and walked out having absolutely no idea what I just said. I also recall my social studies/science class in 6th grade, when I wrote ridiculously long terms to label circles within circles, only to later find out that I was taught words like “mitochondria” or “endoplasmic reticulum.” I remember the physical classroom, the students, the teachers, the atmosphere, the school, but I cannot recollect anything I learned. I went through most of my first years in America as a passive observer, not an active participant, bottling up that feeling of fear combined with a tint of frustration.

Voluntarily leaving one’s homeland is one of the most difficult tasks that my parents have had to do. Regardless of the obstacles they knew were inevitably waiting them, they did it all for the selfless motivation of giving my brother and me more opportunities to make our lives better than the ones they had. For everything that they have done for me and my brother, I am speechless every time I think about even starting to thank them. Acknowledging and appreciating all that my parents and family have done for us, I am determined to make the best of all opportunities presented to me to live up to the challenges that my entire family has weathered. With the help of sincere educators and the resolve for self-improvement, I gradually improved, getting to where I am today.

Through a series of personal and academic obstacles, I have walked out a much stronger person than I could have ever imagined. Although the initial period of rapid adjustments to a completely new and different culture was exceedingly difficult, I now look back with no regrets. Because I could not understand any English at the time, nothing from the outside world could penetrate the rigid language barrier that entrapped me. Ironically, that entrapment left me free to observe things without the interference of other people’s thoughts, wishes, or wants. I was not tempted to impart superficial judgments that would have been contrary to the basis of my moral character. Through this experience, I learned that at the end of the day, it is truly a matter of personal identity to remember where we come from and what that means to us. Knowing who we are allows us to reach deep to the bottom of our hearts to find those concepts, those principles, those values that define our personal philosophy and guide us on the many paths of our lives. Blocking out the noisy background of external influences, shielding ourselves from all attempts to infiltrate our concentration, we allow our inner voice to amplify loudly and clearly to remind us what our true purposes are and what it is that we value most. Therefore, one of the many lessons that I have learned is the importance of acknowledging and valuing one’s root because this allows one to live with what he or she values most. Naturally, the idea of acknowledging one’s roots invites the notion of compassion. We often hear about the uniqueness of our brothers and sisters in

speeches. And certainly, I wholeheartedly believe that every individual is a unique being, brought up by special circumstances, nurtured by the extraordinary ways of the element, and has the potential to become a responsible and respectable citizen. The Pauli Exclusion Principle states that no two electrons can occupy the same quantum mechanical ground in the same atom. So if something as small as an electron, as minute as a bundle of energy cannot even express identicalness, then it is perhaps reasonable to assume that something as complex in both mental and physical scales as a human being must also be unique. Despite my strong belief in this notion, I have decided to focus on a slightly different emphasis today. On the other side of the individuality spectrum is the notion of commonality instead of uniqueness. I believe that if we probe deeper and deeper into our existence, we realize that the core of our common threshold is a sense of unity and fraternity. Therefore, acknowledging our common root, I believe, would naturally welcome the notion of compassion as we understand the importance of assisting our fellow brothers and sisters. This is why I particularly admire the Rotary Club for its “main objective is service — in the community, in the workplace, and around the globe.” I do not believe that being compassionate necessarily means eradicating poverty or eliminating global climate change. What I believe is that from the two extremes of the individuality spectrum, unlike American politics, perhaps we can compromise. Perhaps we should use those unique talents of ours from one side of the individuality spectrum to contribute meaningfully to the other side of the individuality spectrum where commonality lies. Contributing to life simply means, at least in my opinion, doing our best at whatever it is that we love. If we like art, then go ahead and be the best artist we can be, giving life the colors that it needs, putting smiles on the faces of those who find artistic expressions meaningful. If we like history, then go out there and explore our past as far as our capabilities allow, bringing back the knowledge of our ancestors to enhance the database of our intelligence. If we like music, then sing our hearts out to bring pleasure to the ears of our listeners. And of course, if we like science, then pursue it with a passionate drive for the acquisition of new knowledge, presenting life with surprising discoveries of unprecedented benefits. It does not take a diplomat to create a peaceful world. All occupations and talents can contribute to life.

Now, I realize that I have preached to the choir this entire time as everyone sitting here believes in the value of compassionate pursuits. However, I do have a confession to make. Most of what I said this morning was originally part of my valedictory address that I am supposed to deliver tonight at my commencement ceremony. After the address was revised, I had to take out about half of my speech. Having put so much time and effort into my messages, it pained me to delete so much of my original thoughts. Additionally, as you may already be aware from reading my resume, as president of our environmental club, I believe in the value of recycling, reducing, and reusing. So members of the Rotary Club, you just saw the deleted scenes of my valedictory address this morning. However, please do not misconstrue this act as one that indicates my insincerity in the composition of this speech this morning, because I certainly have put a lot of time and effort into what I wanted to tell you this morning. Everything that I have said reinforces my belief in compassion, and it is with this core ideal of altruism that I am so excited to embark upon the next phase of my life. Last time, I have already informed you of my enthusiasm and faith in the power science in solving the greatest societal problems like treating cancers and creating alternative sources of energy. Therefore, I will not reiterate those messages in greater lengths today. Furthermore, last time, I stood before you with the uncertainty of college choices, deciding between three different colleges. After spending a weeklong excursion to visit those colleges to make an informed decision, the choices became even more difficult to rule out. I fell in love with

all three colleges with their great academic resources and plentiful extracurricular opportunities. After a long and somewhat mentally draining week after the visits, I am happy to inform you today that I have officially matriculated at one of the colleges [college's name removed] as a proud member of the Class of 2016. I decided to come to this institution for many reasons, but one of the most significant ones directly deals with the institute's commitment to public service, rooted in the notion of compassion. Without a doubt, the institute's science and engineering are among the best in the entire world, and this is particularly important to me because I wish to study physics in college. However, in addition to its great academic resources, the institute has a plethora of community service projects. At the institute, the Public Service Center and other university branches invest a tremendous amount of money in students who wish to bring their innovative ideas to third-world communities to seek beneficial changes. In addition, the institute also has many programs for study-abroad opportunities to send students to other countries so that they can directly make observations of what they seek to study. Not only does this give them a broadened perspective of their field, but it also widens their point-of-view regarding humankind in general as they witness the cultures, religions, living standards, and other qualities of different communities. The institute is so dedicated to community service that there is even a student house whose residents are committed to international development. This is to demonstrate to you that community service is not only a university commitment, but it resonates visibly within the student body as well. This, among other reasons, is why I chose the institute over the other great colleges that I have had the privilege of evaluating.

At this institution, I foresee myself chasing after my dreams, doing what I love to do to the best of my abilities, and use my unique talents and occupation to contribute meaningfully to the common welfare of our fellow humans. I foresee myself in the laboratories and hopefully make minor contributions to the lives of others through scientific discoveries.

I thank you again for sparing me the pain of discarding parts of my speech and for giving an opportunity to get over stage fright in preparation for tonight. Most importantly of all, I thank you for your support and confidence in my future. I cannot adequately express how appreciative I am of your assistance.

Thank you!