

## Class Charge – Take 2

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Good afternoon, I'd like to thank the class of 05 for having us all here today to celebrate their graduation from Bentley School. I'm honored to be up here with you.

I have a unique bond with the class of 05, the kind of bond that you get when you are thrown into a new situation with a bunch of people you don't know and you're the youngest one around. You know, scared but hoping no one will notice. I was trying to figure out how the school worked right along side of you. It all turned out well in the end didn't it? Which is good, since we're all throwing ourselves right back into that same situation in a few months.

The class charge amounts to strong advice and advice is a funny thing, you'll only really understand it until a moment after it's too late. Don't feel bad about this, it's part of being human, for example, "don't touch the stove, it's hot," "it is? Ouch" sound familiar? Or for that matter, "get your community service hours done early."

Along those lines, learning from your mistakes is easy, learning from other people's mistakes is something really valuable. The remarkable thing is that people love to write about their mistakes and how they avoided them in the future, and guess what you have to *read a lot* in college. One of my college professors once said "part of college is learning how to talk intelligently about books you haven't read!" and then proceeded to demand answers from students whether they read or not. So yes, part of college will be

that there are various ways to digest a book and reading just happens to be the most enjoyable and time consuming one.

My charge to you however is more global in nature: “follow your passions and live responsibly.”

First, think back to your eighth grade graduation... do you feel like you've changed a bit between then and now? Would you say that your interests might lie elsewhere? Feel like you have a better grip on how the world works? Believe it or not you are going to think the same thing about today when you graduate college; in fact you are probably going to think the same thing about today at the end of next year.

You really can't know what you are going to do with your life, with your job, even where you're going to live. In fact, current studies are saying that most of you will have up to five distinct careers throughout your life. Additionally, your future career might not even exist yet: ten years ago there wasn't a single person dreaming of being a web designer because there was NO WEB, but now there are tons of web designers.

For me, I didn't even consider teaching until half way through my senior year in college, just 6 months before I arrived at Bentley. So it turned out that I was interested in teaching and it was a good thing that I was pursuing passions; as unlikely as it may seem, the fact that I taught skiing in the winters helped me get a job here. Additionally my

passion for fixing things and taking them apart certainly has helped me with teaching physics. My point is that these were things I did independently of any future plan because I wanted to and yet they helped me later in life. Another less obvious example is quoting movies.

As a freshmen in college, I took up the hobby of quoting movies. Not what you would call a “good use of time” but it was fun. A few months ago I had to do a demonstration class as I was looking for jobs up in Seattle. For my demo lesson, I was teaching 8 seniors, 3 of which were 10 minutes late it was spirit week and after lunch. They weren’t exactly primed for learning physics. So as I start talking about lasers a student asks me if they are “attached to friggin’ sharks’ foreheads,” clearly not concerned with my opinion and quite proud of himself, to which I responded, “no, if they were attached to any marine creature it would be an ill-tempered sea bass.” Oddly firing a movie reference right back at this student somehow gave me authority in his eyes, forget the quality of the physics. The point is not that quoting movies is a valuable skill, it’s not, rather that anything you pursue with passion tends to help you out in ways you can’t predict. So trust your interests to lead you in the right direction.

Responsibility. It is one of the most important things you can have. I have friends from college, really smart friends who are unemployable because they have problems in this area. Then can debate exquisitely, write amazingly well and internalize incredibly complex concepts but when it comes to arriving at work on time or getting things in by a due date, they’re hopeless and they rarely survive a job for more than 6 months. One of

the most valuable skills you learn in high school and college is getting assignments in on time, even the ones that don't interest you, in fact especially the ones that don't interest you. Jobs consist of receiving assignments, figuring out what is actually expected of you and completing that assignment on time. Sound familiar? So even if you become a writer, the fact that you turned in your math homework on time, actually will help you do your job better. Just about every job and certainly the ones you are qualified for during and after college, values reliability over sheer brain power.

Responsibility is an interesting thing, it isn't taught explicitly and if you are responsible, you are rarely acknowledged for it, in fact you may find that you are asked to do more because of it. So I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the students up here who were consistently responsible about doing their work, making up their work and showing up to class on time. I'd also like to point out that when you are in a job, being "asked to do more" roughly corresponds to being promoted, which is a very positive reinforcement of responsibility. There are other fringe benefits too, for example the best way to be lazy is to do your work on time! Why? Because you are getting maximum credit for the same amount of work, when you are both lazy and responsible they call it efficient; which sounds much better.

Of course there's more to it than that, at a deeper level it is acknowledging the affect you have on other people, your environment and yourself. It's about taking responsibility for your intended effects as well as your unintended effects. Being responsible however doesn't mean you can't go out and have a good time; in fact I highly recommend

spending time with your fellow classmates, staying up too late conversing, and having a good time. The responsibility comes in by not going wild the night before your mid-term or responsibly accepting the consequences of staying out too late before your midterm. (I'd recommend the first option) No matter where you fall on the responsibility spectrum at the moment, it is my strong recommendation that you continue to develop your sense of responsibility.

So my class of 2005, my charge to you is this: pursue your passions and live responsibly. Your life and the lives of those around you will be more enjoyable for it. Thank you and charge on.