

Engineering Commencement

Congratulations

It is my honor to convey to you congratulations
on behalf of the Officers of the University
Congratulations to the Class of 1988E...
And to your families and friends who have
gathered with us this evening to
celebrate your achievements

Actually, this is also a great personal pleasure,
since your class is very special.

The Class of 1988

1. In a sense, I view you as half mine!
Some of you who are able to remember far
back into the dim past of your freshman and
sophomore years may also remember that
I was once your Dean way back in those
prehistoric times...
2. It was your class that led the charge to
the North Campus...and while the move
during your years at Michigan may have
sometimes been inconvenient and
frustrating, I suspect that you will also
look back on this as a time of great
excitement for Michigan Engineering
3. Your Class is special for yet another reason...
because of the time at which you are graduating
--at the dawn of what is sometimes called the
Information Age

Actually, something even more profound is

happening at just the time when you are graduating
Looking back over history, one can identify certain
abrupt changes, discontinuities, in the nature,
the very fabric of our civilization...

The Renaissance, the Age of Reason, the Age
of Discovery, the Industrial Revolution

You are graduating at a time when our
civilization is going through yet another
such change...

A change in which we are evolving from a
resource-intensive to a knowledge-
intensive society...

A transition in which..

Intellectual capital--brainpower-- is replacing
financial and physical capital as key to
our strength, prosperity, and well-being

It is not just the impact of science technology...
although, to be sure, this is playing a critical --
indeed, perhaps a driving, role.

New ideas and concepts are exploding forth
at ever increasing rates...

New forms of thought such as
Feminism and Pluralism
Liberation Theology

Obscure, yet profound, new ways to
approach knowledge such as
Deconstructionism
Knowledge Engineering

Even new fundamental philosophies
of life, such as the new philosophy
of "literalism", first stated in last
week's Bloom County by Opus...

"You're born...
You live...
You go on a few diets...
You die."

Think about it...

Some real words of wisdom, there...

In a very real sense, the Class of 1988
is graduating during the birth of an
entirely new age...
"An Age of Knowledge"...
In which people and their ideas will be
the most precious commodity of all.

In one sense you are probably the best

prepared of Michigan's graduates today to
respond to this new age, since your
combination of a rigorous education in
science and engineering, pursued within the
more general context of a liberal education,
has prepared you to create and apply new
knowledge across the full span of disciplines
In contrast to the majority of our society, you are
literate both in our traditions of culture...and in
the new forms of knowledge that will determine
our future...

Yet, with this knowledge comes not only opportunity
but responsibility as well.

Remember the haunting passage from T. S. Eliot:

"Where is the life we have lost in living?"

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?"

"Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

While you might view your education at Michigan

as one aimed at extracting knowledge from the vast
information characterizing our society, let me suggest
that our real goal was something far beyond that.

Our goal, indeed, the goal of any liberal education,

was to help you learn how to extract wisdom from
knowledge -- and through that wisdom, prepare you
to learn the art of life itself...

We hope that while at Michigan you have

learned how to find the wisdom in knowledge...
and hence to find the life that is in living"

Congratulations!

Godspeed!!!

And may the force be with you...

The force of the maize and blue!!!