

Platform Guests, Family, and Fellow Graduates. I signed up to be the commencement speaker on a whim. I didn't imagine that I was going to be chosen. With that being said, the main reason I really wanted to be the speaker at first, was to surprise my family. But since then I've realized the opportunity before me. I've written about 15 drafts of this speech just to delete them. I couldn't figure out the message I wanted to convey to you all today. So I've decided to use my top 3. If you follow this advice, I can't guarantee that you will be Bill Gates or Oprah or anybody like that, but I can guarantee that you'll be happy.

Number 1: Do what you love. As cliché as that may sound, it's pretty hard to do. Life tends to push us into the direction of the most money or fame, but if we push that notion aside and do things for the love of them, then the money and fame will find us. I'm not suggesting that you should just forget about that degree you just got in accounting, but I am saying if you love to write songs, dedicate 1 hour per day to it between meetings with clients.

Number 2: You can do anything you set your mind to. Don't feel like you can't do something just because it's hard. Anything worth something is worth fighting for. Take the wright brothers for instance. There's nothing harder than the ground when you're falling from a few hundred feet face first, but they never let that fear of falling deter them from jumping.

And Number 3: Never forget where you've come from. This is of utmost importance. You can never get where you want to go, without knowing where you started from. The Wolfpack will always and forever be apart of each and every one of us. Not just the memories of the times that we beat that blue school over the hill in almost every sport,

but the other things we've gained while being here as well. Like the friends that we've made; the friends that help us through when times get tough, or those same friends that get on our last nerve when we're trying to take a nap after an 8:05 class. NC State is also with us every time we use the extracurricular life lessons that we've learned here. Like how to survive on 4 hours of sleep, or how to make 9 meals stretch an entire week. In all seriousness, the knowledge, relationships, and life lessons that NC State has given all of us is immeasurable, so as long we never forget them, we will always be poised to do great things.

That's it. Those are my 3 messages to you all: do what you love; you can do anything you set your mind to; and never forget where you've come from. If you keep these points in the back of your mind and follow them, you will have succeeded at the pursuit of happiness. Now one last thing before I go. I would like to share with you some direction that I've received from my pastor, Harold Garner's book. He is a man that I truly respect. Everyone look to someone near you and repeat after me: say "neighbor", "I may not know you", "but, Congratulations", "good luck", "and welcome to your new beginning." Ok now everyone look back at me. In the words of Orrin Hatch, a former U.S. Senator: There is a good reason they call these ceremonies "commencement exercises." Graduation is not the end; it's the beginning. So lets get started. Congratulations North Carolina State University Class of 2013.

Thank You!