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"Through the Eyes of Others"

Steven C. Bahls
Augustana College

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Commencement Comments to the Class of 2004

"Through the Eyes of Others"

Good afternoon. My name is Steve Bahls and I have the privilege of serving as the eighth president of Augustana College.

Welcome to the commencement ceremony for the Augustana College Class of 2004. Graduates, we are proud of you and your achievements.

Graduates, parents and friends - did you know that only three percent of college graduates graduate from small, residential liberal arts colleges? A liberal arts education is time-tested and is education at its best. It provides the problem solving and citizenship skills demanded in today's global community. It is a privilege for students to have the opportunity to attend a liberal arts college. Likewise, it is an honor for Augustana to have had these graduates as our students.

I am fond of telling first year students that the benefit of a liberal arts education is what I call the ability to turn the crystal. Can you see this crystal? What happens when you turn a crystal? You are able to look through the crystal and see the room from different angles. Students, in visiting with you over the last several months, it is clear to me that you are now able to look at today's issues and life's challenges from various angles and facets, as if you are turning the crystal. You are able to look at issues and challenges through the eyes of a philosopher, a theologian, a psychologist, a sociologist, a scientist, an economist and a business person. You are able to shed light on problems by gaining insight from the classics and from other cultures. Your study of literature, art and music has given you insights on the subtlety of the human condition. Graduates - never stop turning the crystal. Always look at problems not only through your eyes, but through the eyes of others. Never hesitate to ask the tough questions. As scientist Jacob Bronowski said "ask an impertinent question, and you are on the way to the pertinent answer."

Today, in addition to bestowing the Bachelor of Arts degree to our graduates, we will award honorary degrees to two individuals. One is The Honorable Bradley Smith, Chair of the Federal Elections Commission. The other is Dr. Daniel Tsui, a Nobel Prize winner in physics and professor at Princeton University. Both of these individuals are beneficiaries of a liberal arts education, one at Kalamazoo College, a college similar to ours, and one at Augustana. They have taken the skills of reflective, integrative, critical and creative thinking and have made important and lasting contributions to society - one as a physicist and one as policy maker. They do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. You have the potential to do the same. You have been given the gift they both received - a quality liberal arts education from a dedicated faculty. Their faculty believed in them like your faculty believes in you. We believe that you, like our honorary degree recipients, will take what you learned here and use it to make significant contributions to our society. Your contributions may not all be as grand as theirs, but your contributions will be vitally important to your community, your family, your workplace and the many organization with which you will affiliate.

Just as you have learned to engage in integrative, critical and creative thinking, you have also help Augustana's faculty and administration to turn the crystal. Through your thoughtful comments in class, the insights you demonstrated in papers, through your works of art and music, and through your passion for public service, you have helped us learn by looking at life's challenges and delights though your eyes. From your insights, we have grown, just as you have grown. The faculty and administration of Augustana offer our deepest thanks to you, our graduates, for the privilege of serving you and for the insights we've gained from you. We also offer our heartiest congratulations.

May God bless and keep the Augustana College Class of 2004.



Accounting	Communication Studies	Geography	Music	Pre-Optometry
Africana Studies	Computer Science	Geology	Music Education	Pre-Pharmacy
Anthropology	Creative Writing	German Studies	Music Performance	Pre-Physical Therapy
Art	Economics	Greek	Neuroscience	Pre-Physician Assistant
Art History	Elementary Education	Graphic Design	Non-Profit Leadership	Pre-Seminary
Asian Studies	Engineering	History	Development	Pre-Veterinary Medicine
Biochemistry	Engineering Physics	International Business	Philosophy	Psychology
Biology	English (Literature)	Japanese	Physics	Religion
Business Administration	English (Writing)	Landscape Architecture	Political Science	Scandinavian Studies
Chemistry	Environmental Management	Latin	Pre-Dentistry	Secondary Education
Chinese	& Forestry	Library and Information	Pre-Law	Sociology
Classics	Environmental Studies	Science	Pre-Medicine	Sociology (Social Welfare)
Communication Sciences	Ethics	Mathematics	Pre-Music Therapy	Spanish
& Disorders	French	Multimedia Journalism	Pre-Nursing	Theatre
		& Mass Communication	Pre-Occupational Therapy	Women's & Gender Studies