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"Asking the Tough Questions"

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Commencement Comments to the Class of 2006

"Asking the Tough Questions"

Good afternoon. And welcome to Augustana College 's 146th Annual Commencement. On behalf of the faculty, let me be the first to congratulate the 525 members of the Augustana College Class of 2006.

The several weeks preceding graduation are always special times at Augustana. During these weeks we celebrate the considerable talents of all of our students, but especially our seniors. Whether it is our choirs, our bands, our orchestra, our dance company, our theater and opera groups, or our senior studio art show, the fine and performing arts are alive and well at the college. I watched our athletic teams excel with national rankings. I've seen your research presentations and presentations of senior projects. All of this leads me to believe that the Class of 2006 is, indeed, outstanding in all respects.

But in addition to enjoying all of your accomplishments, there is something else I've observed about this class over the last few weeks. As this day has neared, you have become much more reflective about your lives - and I applaud that. Recently, I've listened as your classmates explained how their research experiences caused them to ask who they were and to think more deeply about their life's calling. During a party for the release of our literary magazine, SAGA, last week at the Dahl President's Home, it was fascinating to listen to students talk about the ways in which their poetry and prose caused them to wonder why things are the way they are - and ask whether they must always be that way. And, as senior athletes celebrated their accomplishments last weekend, I was fascinated by stories about how athletics at Augustana helped you ask the important questions in life - again, including who you are and what is your life's calling.

Many of you have reflected that the goals you brought with you to Augustana have changed because of your experiences here. The well-traveled road that you saw laid out before you when you first came to Augustana has been re-examined, and now you find yourself on a less-traveled path.

I urge you to continue to be as reflective about your life as you have been over the last couple of weeks. As an Augustana graduate, this institution will always be part of you. We've pushed you to ask the tough questions - the ones that start with who and how and why. Who are you, and how does who you are match your life's calling? Why must it be and why can't I change it. These are among life's most important questions.

Today we celebrate your graduation. Will you be different as a graduate of Augustana, rather than another college? I think you will.

I had dinner with the 50th reunion class Friday night. What struck me at the dinner was that each of those graduates still bears the mark of Augustana College. Each has an extraordinarily active life of the mind. As a group they are reflective about life and still asking the tough questions about their role in it. Many described to me the joys that they found in life because they took a less-traveled road.

What will you be like in 50 years? How will you be using your Augustana education? I think you will use it well.

Always ask why, even - and especially - when it is impertinent to do so. And always ponder your life's calling. Turn the crystal. Consider the paths that branch off from the well-traveled roads. If you do so, perhaps when you return for your 50th reunion, you'll better understand the words of Robert Frost in *The Road Not Taken*. The words of the poet:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Many of you, I suspect, will take the road less traveled. But I believe that what you have learned about yourselves at Augustana will make "all the difference" for each and every one of you. On behalf of the faculty, it has been a pleasure to serve you. Best wishes and may God bless and keep the Augustana College Class of 2006.



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