

Commencement Chapel
Jennifer Cottone
May 28, 2006

Good morning and welcome. Welcome parents, friends and family. Welcome graduates.

The energy in this chapel is palpable. Where is it coming from? Well certainly there is the buzz of pride, accomplishment and achievement emanating from you all. Every paper completed, test taken, athletic team cheered, artistic creation finished and every good decision made deserves to be recognized, indeed celebrated, on this very special day of graduation. But that is not it, or at least not all of the energy being felt right now in this space.

Perhaps it is the energy of nervousness- similar to the anticipation that I experienced waiting for my turn at this podium. Could it be that our seniors are anxious, excited, elated or even hungry for that printed diploma, crisp and official, waiting to be pressed into the palms of every qualified candidate. Yes, definitely we can all appreciate that level of energy present in the room right now.

But I am not satisfied- perhaps it is my scientific bend, but I feel as though I have not accounted for all of the energy in this chapel.

Searching these faces, reading your body language and most importantly, having the exquisite pleasure of knowing each and every one of you as scholars, artists, athletes, and community members, I am certain I know what this electrifying, pulsating energy truly is. Dearest members of the Class of '06, this energy is indeed your own potential.

As I allude to this term of potential energy, I am hopeful that your SAS science career immediately triggers an image of a ball on top of a hill. If given a pencil and paper, most of you could begin to calculate the potential energy of that ball, given certain known

values of height and mass. Well as sick as it is trying to insert just one more physics lesson into your Commencement Chapel Address, I want you to take that scenario, this ball perched precariously on the very edge of the hill, to represent you at this present moment. We are all gathered here today to celebrate the effort, tenacity and sheer grit you have all exhibited to get to the top of this educational mountain. And now, with the confidence and optimism of the SAS faculty, you will soon stand in front of Mr. Roach ready to receive your diploma, your symbol of readiness and achievement, your green light to do something wonderful, meaningful and critical to the betterment of our humanity.

Things must seem so clear from atop that hill. You can see your future, spanning vistas of a college education, possible career paths and fulfilling relationships and commitments that lie ahead. And yet, the future can be nerve-racking and fill you with anxiety. Now that you have climbed this hill and you can look so far, will you be able to find your way? What is your next step? Your potential energy is indeed paradoxical - a Catch-22 so to speak - so loaded with promise, optimism, hope. Just look around you at the people that are here today. Look at their faces and you will know that they, that we believe in you. However, simultaneously, your own potential can cause angst and uncertainty about all that you will be able to achieve and all that we expect you to achieve.

Despite this dichotomy of emotions - hope and angst, optimism and fear - these emotions emit energy, and energy can be harnessed for action. Do not be paralyzed by your own dreams and aspirations, but rather direct your focus on how you live your life. The question is not what you will do, but rather how you will do it. Recall all of the fortifying words Mr. Roach has shared with you over the years; remember the ethos of this School. Live with integrity. All of the blessings of this earth - health, family, opportunity and human connections - can be taken away from you in an instant, but not your integrity. Only you can choose to dole this out. This wise grain of truth should guide every decision you consider: live ethically, live morally, let kindness, empathy and generosity rule your way. It is how you live your life that really matters. The world today is ripe with

opportunity, begging for your creativity, innovation and energy, but most importantly, your optimism, your integrity. Your potential energy is immense.

All this talk of energy must have you exhausted, particularly considering all of your late night activities and this past crazy week. Although the festivities will continue, please do take a moment to appreciate all that you have achieved in your last few years at SAS and more importantly, feel recharged, excited and energized about the days ahead, feel moved and motivated by your own potential energy. Apply it well.