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Honors Night Speech- June 10th, 2010

The academic hall of fame represents the numerical score a student achieves on his or her ACT, the privilege of calling oneself an AP scholar with distinction, as well as the competence of an individual based on their GPA. But what should the culmination of those attributes truly portray? It should be indicative of a student's effort... time... dedication and emphasis placed on academics: the desire to achieve scholastic success, and the willingness to sacrifice fun here and there in hopes of having a brighter future. It should be representative of an individual's passion to learn: not just being present in class, but also being proactive.... not just brushing away what you don't understand, rather taking the extra two minutes after class to ask a question. It should be indicative of an individual's journey towards perfection.

I am honored for being selected as the first person inducted into the Harrison High School Academic Hall of Fame. I am far from the elite collection of great scholars who have graduated in our school's forty-year history. I am humbled and honored to represent the leaders and the best of Harrison High school who have come before me; it is also exciting to pass on the torch and set the bar for the future. But take a closer look at the voyage of high school. What map guided both you and me through? What torches lit the way? My academic success was not solely based on individual ability. And so...thank you to the administration. Mr. Johnson, Mr. Beazley, and Mr. O'Brien for ensuring that the students and staff organizations are running on all gears. Thank you Mrs. Leach, as our academic dean, for shaping how we learn and improving how we interact amongst ourselves. Thank you to the counselors, whose strive

to architect the best blueprint for each student, to help them ensure that college is not a fallacy of their dreams, but a reality of life. Thank you to the teachers. Thank you Mrs. Robinson, Ms. Milenkovich. I appreciate Mr. Yoder, Mrs. Babcock. Thank you Mr. Gardener, Mr. Stuff. Thank you Coach Herrington. I never thought I would say this..but I miss doubles, and those Wednesday practices. Thank you Ms. TORRES. And maybe this is why I may have been chosen to be in the academic hall of fame... and this probably makes me a nerd (yes I know) ...but honestly...and simply put...I love math and science. Thank you Mr. Teachman, Thank You Mrs. Sweet. Thank you Shildberg, Lashbrook, Guenzel, Dail, and Meisner. Without you, -academics, let alone a hall of fame would not be possible. Thank You.

As students who will soon be graduating I expect all of you are excited to finally be finished, and moving on. Now come the grad parties, where the word “congratulations” is heard as frequently as the question “where are you going next?” or “what are you doing with your life?”. Now comes the three months of nervous anticipation, collecting money, purchasing dorm room essentials, figuring out where you are living, and purchasing those precious football tickets. Now comes the last time you may spend every day with the friends you have made over the past years. The last time you can call yourself a high school student. The last time you can be a part of Water Wars. You have heard it from your elders...parents, grandparents, relatives and teachers alike. But sometimes it takes another student for it to actually sink in. College and what you do next will define you as a person and dictate the plot of the rest of your life. Though it may sound pessimistic and somber, society will not recognize you for what you have accomplished in high school- but rather- how you utilized those triumphs to establish and propel your aspirations.

College is an incredibly revealing experience. You will meet individuals from drastically different backgrounds. Those who have lived in poverty and yearn to achieve the American dream. Those who have traveled and experienced the world. Those who have been raised in cultures completely opposite to views and beliefs you uphold. Take these people as an opportunity to decorate your life with

knowledge that can't be taught in the classroom. Knowledge of how people live, think, learn, survive, and dream differently. Grasp it as an opportunity to learn from others. Most of you will be transitioning to an academic and social environment you haven't faced before. There will be thousands of students. At times you will feel small and inferior to the rest of the university. At times you will feel like just a number on an ID card. It's your undertaking to flourish as individuals and as people of society. Pursue your hobbies, join organizations that inspire and interest you. Don't go in with the mind set of "if I join this or that..I may get a better job". Chase your dreams and fulfill your desires. Some of you may need to provide for your family as soon as possible. And all of you have obligations you must meet. But remember the notion that you can immerse yourself in what you NEED to do, while achieving what you WANT to do.

You will know you are in college when you hit your head against the walls of the three by three shower stalls, when you lock yourself out of your OWN room with nothing but a towel on, when you realize its 11:30 at night and your engineering design, Spanish presentation, and paper on Dante are due at 12, when you wake up at six in the morning for the Michigan-Notre Dame game...and later realize it was a game one that you will definitely share with your grandchildren, when your mother calls at midnight on Saturday night and says "I hope I didn't wake you up, just wanted to make sure you had dinner", when your father calls and tells you he changed the oil in the car...yesterday....just to talk to you..(cool dad), when you have to park your friend's car in the smallest parking spot at your college house...and inevitably get a dent in it....but you'll still enjoy every second.

You will know you're in college when you just bought a book for two hundred dollars, when you learn your professor is found in FORBES greatest young minds for a new bendable concrete material, and when you feel like you have the most freedom you have ever had in your life. The privilege of freedom requires the practice of responsibility. Here is my advice. Be conservative with your money. Just because your parents aren't there doesn't mean studying should become a thought of the past. You will

learn quickly that college requires you to learn a plethora of knowledge on your own. You will have to work, read, review, study, and do it all again and again...WORK HARD...PLAY HARD...in that order. As I mentioned before, this next phase of your life will mold your future, the way you think, the manner in which you approach life, the perspective from which you judge others, and how you solve the infinite puzzles of life. President Barack Obama, at this year's commencement ceremony at the University of Michigan's Big House, left us students with a message which I believe is universal, and emphasizes what we should all strive for in our careers as students and humans. He stated...

For if we choose only to expose ourselves to opinions and viewpoints that are in line with our own, studies suggest that we will become more polarized and set in our ways. And that will only reinforce and even deepen the political divides in this country. But if we choose to actively seek out information that challenges our assumptions and our beliefs, perhaps we can begin to understand where the people who disagree with us are coming from.^[1]

He goes on to say...

Still, if you're someone who only reads the editorial page of The New York Times, try glancing at the page of The Wall Street Journal once in awhile. If you're a fan of Glenn Beck or Rush Limbaugh, try reading a few columns on the Huffington Post website. It may make your blood boil; your mind may not often be changed. But the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship.^[1]

Furthermore he orates a message which I believe is crucial for you to take into college...the practice of engaging in different experiences with different kinds of people is important. For four years at Harrison, you have been exposed to diverse thinkers, athletes, and scholars; teachers and students. He urges...

Not to narrow your broad intellectual exposure just because you're leaving here. Instead, seek to expand it. If you grew up in a big city, spend some time with some who grew up in a rural town. If you find yourself only hanging around with people of your race or your ethnicity or your religion, broaden your circle to include people who've had different backgrounds and life experiences. You'll learn what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes, and in the process, you'll help make this democracy work.^[1]

Cherish these last few moments of high school, enjoy this summer, and know that your first year of college will go by faster than your senior year of high school. Again I am honored for being inducted into the academic hall of fame. And as always....go hawks...and go blue.

References

1. "Text of President Barack Obama's speech at University of Michigan Commencement - AnnArbor.com." *Ann Arbor News, Blogs, Events & Discussion - AnnArbor.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 June 2010. <<http://www.annarbor.com/news/text-of-president-barack-obamas-speech-at-university-of-michigan-commencement/>>.