

# DEPARTING PEARLS OF WISDOM

Louis Schmier

**C**ongratulations. So, now you have your diploma. Now you want me to be something like a North Star, to offer you some sort of guidance for walking in the right direction, the 'Now what' path that you're coming up to. You really don't need me except to tell you that you have yourself. Look inside. If you find a time and place to think silently about the hesitant person you were when you first stepped on campus..., who you are at this moment, how you got here, and what you can become 'out there,' you'll see that you've fashioned your own 'true north' compass. You really don't need my tinkering around.

All through these past years, family and friends and faculty have doubted you; at times, you faltered and doubted yourself; then you heroically—yes, heroically—picked yourself with an 'I'll show them' attitude. But, you never really had an 'I'll show me' attitude.

Yeah, you persevered and have your diploma. All that says is what you did. Look at what it says about who you are and can become. Now, you see you're stuffed full of the information and skills, the grades and GPA, that you needed to get that sheepskin. Do you see, however, that you've stuffed yourself with the right stuff, with what it takes to use that stuff in the right way? If you don't see that and use it, the diploma is worth diddly-squat. Diploma and education are not necessarily synonymous terms. An education is more likely to help you avoid falling under the spell of temptation than is training. And, temptation is all around you.

Someone is always going to tell you that you're wrong, that it's too hard, that you can't do that, that it's impossible. You'll be tempted to believe that your critics are right. You'll be pressured to compromise yourself. You'll feel the demands imposed by others to become the person they want you to become. Conquer all that, as you learned to do..., use what you learned about yourself, and you'll find the courage to live.

And, it does take courage to truly live a life of being alive. The world, academic and non-academic alike, is full of people who have stopped listening to themselves, who have been frightened off-course, who have listened to others telling them what they ought to do, how they ought to behave, what they ought to think, what values they ought to possess, what they ought to say. Too many people have allowed themselves to become flatten, to lose their humanity, to relinquish their individuality, to sheepishly follow the crowd and bleat only that which is popular, to lose what someone called “the rapture of being alive.”

You’ve seen it all around on campus and at your job. Now all you have to do is to use the stuff to stay the right course and not to be thrown off course by the obstacles, dangers, and pressures you’ll face. If you accept less than who you are capable of being, if you take a job just to have money to have a good livelihood, if you seek only position and renown, if you stop listening to yourself, if you have no sense of significance or meaning or purpose, if you allow your vision to fade or let others take away your vision, then I warn you that you’ll turn yourself into a slave and you’ll be a very unhappy camper.

Remember, your happiness, your true and deep happiness, comes from being alive, that is, in being alert and aware and involved. It really does not dwell in earning a living; it is found in the value of your inner self, not in the value of your car, house, and bank account. Find a place where you’re happy, not just excited and satisfied and comfortable, and you’ll find the waters that will extinguish the anguish, anxiety, and pain. All that with take daily courage and strength. You’ll need to keep in shape, to develop workout programs for both you body and soul. That way you’ll remain physically and spiritually fit. Trust me, living a significant life each day filled with meaning, purpose, and vision in your life isn’t all that much of a newsworthy spectacle, but it is indeed a spectacular and powerful way to live a significant life.

*Maybe these should be arriving pearls of wisdom  
for incoming students—if they'd listen.*

(used with author’s permission)