

2010 Harvard College Class Day
Wednesday, May 26, 2010
Ivy Oration
Text is as prepared for delivery

Congrats! Now You Deserve a Smoothie
By James MacLure Wilsterman

Thank you Senior Class Committee. Thank you Class Day Speakers. Thank you Christiane Amanpour for joining us today... you look ravishing. And of course, thanks to each of YOU for coming out this afternoon to test our dramatically expanded “Outdoor Common Spaces” initiative. Now featuring 30,000 plastic chairs.

Before I begin though, I have a confession to make. While sitting here listening to these amazing speeches it has occurred to me that I was meant to include “clichéd advice” as a final half-baked afterthought, thrown in at the conclusion of my reflections. I would like to caution you: Clichéd advice was NOT originally part of my prepared remarks.

Fortunately, I have spoken with Dean Hammonds, and she has graciously agreed to create a Task Force on Clichéd Advice to formulate some recommendations. I encourage you all to peruse this report when it is scheduled to be released: in August 2017.

Now I will proceed with my original speech. First I would like to say “Hey” to all of you, with a slight vertical head nod: Hey. This is in tacit acknowledgment that we once met during freshman week, and of course, this has been our customary greeting when crossing paths in the Yard for the past four years. Typically, you respond: “What's up?” With a similar vertical head thrust and absolutely zero intention to wait for my reply—And these conversations have been deeply rewarding. I feel immensely fortunate that we have been able to share countless moments like these ever since that first ice cream social, when YOU asked me whether or not I have any siblings, and then we made out two times.

Today, however, I would like to extend our normal dialogue by, for once, actually telling you WHAT IS UP. And when I say dialogue—I mean monologue. I will continue speaking for the next four minutes and you will have NO opportunity to respond. And

also—in case this is at all unclear—if we ever by chance run into each other in the future out shopping for private jets or perhaps inside white collar penitentiaries, we will, of course, return to the Hey-Vertical Head Nod-What’s Up-Vertical Head Nod interactions which have served us both so well for so long.

No, in fairness we may not have gotten to know each other perfectly well during our time here. A few of you? Sure, but these true friends... have already heard this speech forty-four times and are no longer paying attention. Nevertheless, EVERY graduate sitting here today shares a collective experience that bonds us and differentiates us from the world of people beyond these gates—whom we are categorically better than across every conceivable metric —I’m joking of course. That is not entirely true. Researchers have shown that once they leave college, Yale graduates are uniformly better than us at musical theater.... AND coping with life-wrenching failure. Unsurprisingly, they also cope very well when they fail to have anyone show up for their musical theater productions.

In complete seriousness though, we ARE a special group. We are the Harvard Class of 2010. We share a lot! We share memories. We share ideas. We share cabs to Logan Airport. Compared to the general population, we share a statistically significantly lower incidence of sexually transmitted diseases... We also share an unusual appreciation for statistics jokes. We share dining hall utensils... everyday. I am not joking—we’ve ALL sucked on the same forks. They are on rotation. And hopefully, in the future, we will all share our incomes and vacation homes with those who generously entertained us here today by giving a Class Day speech.

My fellow graduates, we share a lot. I look out among you and I see a remarkably... pale, disillusioned, sexually-frustrated group of individuals. Why did we do this to ourselves? What did Harvard offer us that was worth this pain and suffering? I know what you’re thinking: The people. Nope. Most Harvard students are D-bags. The real reason we all slogged through this eternal sepulcher of undying misery and despair is because, of course, we learn a LOT at Harvard—mostly, useless crap. But every so often we learn those quintessential Veritas-soaked life-lessons that MIT graduates can only dream of having digitally implanted into their robotic brains.

Lesson One: At Harvard we learn that EXCLUSIVE is always a synonym for AWESOME with the rare exception of Expository Writing 10. Everything else becomes infinitely more appealing when you can bar a large portion of the population from ever participating. Look no further than the Lampoon, final clubs, Teach for America, and oh yeah... HARVARD ITSELF. For this reason, my next joke will be exclusive to my Blackberry Messenger friends—just the SIX of them! Give me one second. I'm actually typing the joke in binary, so I guess only HALF of you will be able to get it. And sent. That is a classic. I can hear the chuckles out there...

Second lesson: At Harvard I have learned that Boloco will pay you \$1,250 dollars to advertise their new strawberry-kiwi smoothie in front of a captive audience of 10,000 people. Wow that is delicious. Boloco: Inspired smoothies. Now would be a great time to take a photo.

Final lesson: Never trust anyone who ever went to Harvard. And yes, I realize that this lesson completely nullifies the majority of my speech. But the fact is that here, we learn to lie to everyone, even our best friends. For example: "Don't worry, investment banks LOVE History of Art and Architecture concentrators. What? Of course, I'm coming to your a cappella jam tonight." Even our Emergency Text Messaging service can only be trusted 20 percent of the time. This all may be hard to swallow. You might say, "Wait, James, look! A message from the official UC President e-mail account. THIS HAS to be trustworthy!" And you would be wrong.

And that's all there is to it really. Fortunately, I think between these three lessons and all of that fantastic clichéd advice we have heard today, we are now PERFECTLY prepared for the real world.

Thank you and best of luck Class of 2010.