

Ohio  
Wesleyan  
University

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**ROCK JONES' 2009 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS**

**Sunday, May 10, 2009**

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## 2009 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

**Rock Jones, Ph.D., President of Ohio Wesleyan University**  
**May 10, 2009**

Welcome to this glorious day, and to this momentous occasion, the 165th Commencement exercises at Ohio Wesleyan University. For our graduates, this day represents the culmination of four years or more of dedicated work, commitment, adventure, occasional pain, and, we hope, enduring satisfaction and accomplishment. For our faculty and staff, this day represents the pinnacle of the academic year. It is for the accomplishments that will be recognized today that we come to this campus every day. And it is you, the students who complete the rigorous challenge of an OWU education and earn the diplomas you receive today, it is you who inspire us, motivate us, and give us the fulfillment of the calling that brings us to the enterprise of education.

Nearly four years ago, most of you arrived at OWU to begin your studies and to pursue your passions. You came from across the country and around the world. You made this campus your home, and on this campus you have left your mark.

Many of you have told me of the value of the relationships you formed with members of this faculty, and of the impact of caring administrators and staff on your time at OWU. You have benefitted from the opportunity to tailor your education to your individual interests. You have learned through a curriculum that led you deeply into the world of ideas, the richness of literature, the wonder of scientific discovery, and the complexity of history; cultivated in you an appreciation for beauty and the arts; and caused you to pause to contemplate the disparities in the human experience and to consider the notion that there are better and worse ways to order one's life and to order the social fabric of the larger world.

You have accepted the challenge to expand your world view, to gain new appreciation for diversity and difference, to embrace ambiguity, and to identify and acknowledge the values that will give shape and meaning to your life. You have honed the capacities of critical thought, of systematic analysis, and of persuasive writing. Through athletic competition and participation in the arts, and through numerous organizations in which you have participated, you have learned the invaluable skills of teamwork and problem solving, of leading and following. You have traveled widely, studying, volunteering, and interning in settings from central Ohio to the ends of the earth. You have grown in ways you could not have imagined four years ago, and you have formed friendships that will remain with you for the rest of your lives.

Along the way, you have left your mark. It is your class that envisioned the new WCSA calendar, gave us the Vote Out the Poverty Initiative, cultivated the relationship with Rahab's Hideaway in Columbus, formed the Interfaith House among the small living units, and developed the Ghana Student Education Fund to provide scholarships for exceptional children who would otherwise not be able to afford an education in Ghana. We celebrate all that you have accomplished.

The diploma you receive today represents a statement by this faculty and this Board of Trustees that you bear the marks of liberally educated persons, with the promise of full flourishing of your human potential. We believe that with these capacities you are ready for the life that awaits you.

Your lives will be lived in a world marked by unprecedented change that none of us can imagine today. Just think about how the world today differs from your arrival four years ago. Four years ago, none of you had a Facebook account. Four years ago, none of you had been to YouTube. Four years ago, none of you knew the meaning of Twitter. Four years ago, none of you had ordered music from iTunes. Just consider how much of your past week has been shaped by one or more of these electronic tools. The rapid change in ways in which we interact with one another electronically has been marked by an equally rapid change in the way nations and societies interact. The world is smaller every day.

The roles played by China, India, and a unified Europe are dramatically different even from just four years ago when you began your time here. We believe that the liberal arts education you have received here at OWU is the best preparation for a world of rapid change in which you will cross cultural boundaries virtually every day of your professional lives. Here at OWU you have been offered the intellectual tools, the social sensitivities, the moral ballast, and the technical capacities to navigate the life that awaits you, to achieve your full potential, to fulfill the passions you already know and those that are yet to be discovered, to become leaders in every sector of human society, and to make an impact, every day, for the common good.

We send you forth with appreciation for what you have accomplished here, with interest in who you will become and what you will continue to accomplish, and with confidence that you will make a difference, for the good, wherever you go, and whatever you do.

To the parents and families of our graduates: You have invested your entire lives in these young women and men. You made deep personal sacrifices in order for them to be where they are today. You did so with love, and with hope. You made the ultimate gift to Ohio Wesleyan University when you entrusted them to our care and gave to us the responsibility for guiding them on the path to becoming educated citizens. I salute you for your commitment. I am honored to share your pride on this day, and I thank you on behalf of all of us at OWU, and on behalf of these graduates seated in front of you.

A final word to the Class of 2009: You always will be a special class to me. You were my Orientation Leader. You welcomed me to OWU with open arms, and in your various positions of leadership, you helped me to make my home here. I thank you for your warmth, for your friendship, and for the joy of sharing in your many accomplishments through this, your senior year. This is your day. Congratulations to each one of you, and best wishes in all that lies ahead.