

Ohio
Wesleyan
University

PRESIDENT ROCK JONES' 2011 COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

Sunday, May 8, 2011

2011 COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

Rock Jones, Ph.D., President of Ohio Wesleyan University
May 8, 2011

Welcome to this glorious day, and to the 167th 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 fulfillment in 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 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 disparities in the human experience. You accepted the challenge to expand your world view, to gain new appreciation for difference, to embrace ambiguity, and to identify the values that will give shape and meaning to your life. You 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 learned the invaluable skills of teamwork and problem solving, of leading and following. You travelled widely, studying, volunteering, and interning in settings from central Ohio to the ends of the earth. You grew in ways you could not have imagined four years ago, and you formed friendships that will remain with you for the rest of your lives.

Here at OWU you have benefitted from an education that connects theory to practice and that has prepared you for leadership in a global society. On a campus with students from 57 countries and with a faculty that comes to us from 14 countries around the world, you learned to value the diversity that is woven in to our social fabric. Within your class alone are students from 30 countries. In your coursework you explored the nuances and complexities of our global society. Some of you spent a semester studying the history and culture of Tanzania. Others studied children in poverty in Calcutta; post-war rebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina; education in Jamaica; sea turtles in Costa Rica; public health in Italy; and the origins of democracy in Athens. You deepened the long-standing OWU commitment to community service, at home and abroad. Some of you helped establish the OWU-Haiti Initiative. You energized this campus with your leadership and with your creative ideas. You have shown already that you are prepared to devote your lives to solving global problems and making the world a better place for every person.

During your time here, you witnessed two historic national elections in this country. You participated in global responses to national disasters of immense proportion in Haiti and Japan, among other places. You followed dramatic changes in leadership in northern Africa, often stimulated by the technologies of new media. On campus you had the opportunity to reflect on the affairs of our world through a curriculum infused with reflection on matters of global importance and through the Sagan National Colloquium that brought to campus individuals who are thought leaders in framing conversations about the future of the planet and of the geopolitical arena. With this engagement of the mind, reflection of the heart, and action of the collective body, you expressed your interest in matters of deep significance, and you signaled your preparation for global leadership in a global society.

Here at OWU you were offered the intellectual tools, the social sensitivities, and the moral ballast to navigate the life that awaits you, 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 everything you have 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. With you, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the OWU Class of 2010. Congratulations to each one of you, and best wishes in all that lies ahead.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce to you the chairperson of the Ohio Wesleyan University Board of Trustees, Michael G. Long, class of 1966. Mike is in his first year as chair of our Board of Trustees. Mike and his wife, Pam, met as students at Ohio Wesleyan. Mike's service to the University includes a tenure on the Board of our Alumni Association and now a long tenure of service on the Board of Trustees. Please join me in welcoming Mike Long.