



**Park University Kansas City Area
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Commencement Keynote Address
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Good morning Interim President Smeed, members of the platform party, parents, friends and the newly graduated class of 2021!

I am so honored to be here today to be one of the first to congratulate and welcome you graduates into the elite ranks of Park University alumni. Your hard work, perseverance and character should be commended 10 times over — as this is an achievement only granted to a select group of people!

Add to this the fact that many of you are active-duty or veterans or non-traditional students, with an age range of 20 to 70 years old! You add so much diversity, color and culture to the fabric of society, weaving your individual designs into the tapestry of life and leaving a positive impression for those who come after you — to attain and achieve even more than we did. You have so much to be proud of and to look forward to, and I personally am curious to see what that will look like!

When Interim President Smeed asked me to speak today, I was humbled. I actually was excited at the idea of coming out from sunny, warm Gilbert, Arizona, to cold, wintery Kansas City to speak with you. I started to think about what memorable wisdom and knowledge I would actually impart to you and started to write the speech in my office one day, when fear set in. Not fear of speaking in front of all of you, but literally fear and chaos that broke out outside of my office at that moment. People were cursing left and right and there was a sense of panic running through the whole building! And it was scaring me!

To give you some background, as Interim President Smeed mentioned, I am the CEO of a company called Bushtex Inc. — a satellite communications firm that does business all over the

world. What does that mean exactly? Well, in a nutshell, we have equipment and personnel that beam up or uplink information and data to satellites that are about 23,000 miles above the earth — we don't deal with the little ones that run your cellphones or GPS systems — but ones that are geosynchronous and are the farthest out in the galaxy and the highest powered. We then receive or downlink that information and disseminate it to where it needs to go, from programming for 5 million subscribers or viewers to various government applications around the world.

One example would be something like the Olympic Games. We have equipment and personnel at the Games, who beam up the various events at the different venues to the satellites so all of you can watch it in real time, wherever you are in the world. And we have been doing that since 1994.

Well that day, out of the blue, one of those satellites decided to disappear...satellites tend to do that. They have a 15- to 20-year shelf life and they spin out and then they go to the satellite graveyard. However, we often know about it beforehand so we can plan. But this time, that satellite decided it was just done. And we could do nothing to control it. So, you can imagine the phone calls and panic that ran through our office that day. And I was definitely reminded of how vivid the English language is, as choice words were flying through our building, both inside and out, that day.

You get the gist of what was happening. While it wasn't a hostile environment, it got pretty heated. Because feeds were lost, millions of subscribers didn't get programming, and information was wiped out. But by the end of that day, everything was restored, we were back online and everyone went out for a much-deserved celebration!

As I reflected upon the day's events and many people's reactions to the crisis, I realized that using choice vocabulary is often used as a stress reliever. Through this crisis, I actually remained quite calm and came to the conclusion that the reason I was so calm was because of a few choice foundational words of my own. And that is what I am going to share with you today — my top four words which all coincidentally begin with the letter "F" that have gotten me through life, and in a sense grounded me as I built our family and business, created a culture for our employees and basically live and lead by. Are you ready?

The first word is **FAITH**. For me, this is one of the most important things in everything I do and probably the most powerful. Faith in a higher power; faith in yourself; faith in those you lead or love. Whether you do believe in a higher power or not, I believe faith is very important in our daily lives. I grew up in a Filipino, Catholic home in Hawaii where I was born and raised, and believing in Baby Jesus was the center of our household. I never understood it much as a kid — just that we went to church a lot and prayed a ton; did rosaries and novenas and lit candles all the time. But as I grew older and now in my daily life, my faith helped to ground and humble me.

You see, I have always felt the need to have control in everything in my life, and boy have I found out that I sure can't! Look at what happened to that satellite that just decided to disappear. But once I decided to let go and have faith that it would all work out, things just did. It might not have been exactly how I had envisioned, but I will tell you, God will not give you anything He knows you cannot handle.

In addition to having a faith, though, is having faith in yourself. If you don't have faith in yourself, then who will? Believing in yourself and knowing that you have the strength, talent and willpower to be the best you is also very important. Have faith in yourself and you can accomplish anything!

And finally, faith in others. I know as a leader, a wife and a mother, I must have faith in those I lead and love. Whether it be my employees, team members, husband or my own three children, there has to be a sense of faith or knowledge that I have belief in them. If they know they are supported, trusted and that hope is alive to continue on, then all is great. Otherwise the foundation is broken and there is nothing to stand on. Just know that as you move on in life, you must have faith---and that will move mountains.

The second word is **FAMILY**. As Anthony Liccione stated, "Everyone needs a house to live in, but a supportive family is what builds a home." This is what family is all about — to be supportive to each other so we can be the best that we can be to be successful in all you do!

Family does not necessarily always mean your parents, siblings, children or guardians. Family can be the friend who you are able to talk to without judgment, the faculty member who talked you off the ledge when you were about to quit school, the neighbor who brought you soup when you were sick or simply a co-worker who you rely on to pick up the slack when you are not at your best.

Family practices kindness and care — something we desperately need in this world today. And family doesn't leave each other behind, nor do they step on each other to get ahead. Family practices empathy. If we practice empathy, honesty, understanding and transparency, our lives will be a whole lot easier.

Many of you will go off into the world, to places unknown where the faces around you will be strangers. Find your tribe, go out and network with those who have like interests. Create families of your own, whether it be friendships, business networks or circles of trust. These types of families are so important to keep us balanced!

At this time, I would like to ask all of you graduates to stand up. I would like you now to face your family members or those supporting you today and give them a round of applause. Without them, you probably would not be here today.

You are all part of the Park University family and will always be. Take pride in that and make this tribe your own!

The next word is **FAILURE**. How many of you remember the first time you totally failed at something? How did it make you feel? How did you handle it? Did it make you want to quit? Failure helped to shape who I am today. Growing up, as I mentioned, in an Asian family, failure was not an option. If I even got an "A-" on a test, my parents treated it as if I had gotten an "F" — it was just not acceptable. I was put into activities that you could not make mistakes or fail.

Piano and playing the oboe for example; yes, I played the oboe...you really can't make a mistake as it would be very noticeable. In my younger years, I was afraid of making any mistakes, taking risks and stepping out of my comfort zone because I just didn't want to fail.

Well, zoom up to the present, where I have had many failures, mistakes and missteps, and honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way. Now I am not promoting failure or asking you to fail in any way! But failure truly can make or break a person. It is how you pick yourself up afterward that makes a difference in who you are and it builds character. Failure is needed. It shakes things up, it breaks things down. It forces us to look at things we take for granted. It should not stop any one of us to think innovatively, creatively or even riskily, both personally and professionally. It might mean stepping out of your comfort zone, or God-forbid, ask questions! If we fail, try all options and don't be lazy. But by no means should you quit or give up! You just need to pull up your "big boy/big girl" pants and keep going. Strength is the key word here and I know all of you are strong-willed folk; otherwise you would not be getting this degree today!

Finally, the last of my recommended words doesn't actually start with an "F," but phonetically sounds like it — it is **PHILANTHROPY**. My mother used to always tell me, "It is a blessing to be blessed to bless others. When you give, it will come back to you tenfold."

It is so important to give back — and it doesn't always mean money or charitable donations. If you can give back in time, talent or treasure, it is all the more purposeful and meaningful. It not only gives a person a way to help build a community or organization, it also gives you a way to engage in something bigger than yourself, other than what you are doing in the now. It can also help you take a pulse of what is going on in the world around you!

So, whether it be buying Girl Scout cookies, serving at your church or volunteering on a committee that involves your talent and knowledge, do it! It will help you become a better person and make you a great contributor to this world! And don't forget this wonderful University you just graduated from — Park University. I wouldn't be doing my job as a trustee if I didn't get you thinking about giving back in some way to this institution that gave you an amazing education!

Faith. Family. Failure. Philanthropy. Those are my guiding words. What kind of words do you live by? If you don't have a set of your own words, start thinking of some — and they don't have to start with the letter "F." Remember, one day, your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it is worth watching!

Good luck graduates, in all of your future endeavors. I know you will all do well. Why? Because you are a graduate of Park University!

Thank you for allowing me to be here to celebrate it with you, and again, congratulations to you all!