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## Remarks of Class President

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## Ted Delicath '13 - Remarks of Class President

May 5, 2013

I'd like to begin today with a broad thank you to the faculty and staff that provided structure to my schedule and challenged me during my time at IWU. To my fellow classmates, thank you. Thank you for teaching me the lessons that transcend the classroom and for putting up with me over the last four years, and the bombardment of emails over the last couple of weeks. To the families of my fellow peers I commend you for raising such determined and compassionate young men and women. Whenever I found my source of motivation nearly depleted, it was always one of your children that reinvigorated me. To my best friend and hero, Andrew Weishar, you were the catalyst behind this speech and I will strive to live up to your example everyday. Today is Andrew's mother's birthday, and so, as you bask in your children's accomplishments today, please realize how fortunate we all are. Lastly, to my mother—who most of you know as Momma D—your unwavering support and tireless work ethic instilled in me the realization that altruism is alive and well in the hearts of mothers and fathers everywhere. Please understand capturing my gratefulness to you will never be possible, and that I simply love you.

I believe it is foolish to go the traditional route and try to give advice. In the seats before me and behind me sit talented, diverse, and intelligent men and women. In attendance is a wealth of tenured knowledge and experience, so I believe my advice would add little value to the stock of pre-existing knowledge. Moreover, my time here will not recount the events that occurred over the past 4 years, for those are too numerous to sufficiently recall. Such instances should remain close to your hearts and be reminisced with the kindred spirits who took part in their creation. My relative youth and life's unpredictability hinder me from providing you with specific advice, so I believe the only way to properly proceed is to begin where many Wesleyan speeches end, with that ever-so-frequently cited Minor Myers quote. Before you tune out, I promise I don't want to travel the traditional path. Instead, I want explore what our former president meant when he asked all Wesleyan students to, **"Go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good."** I certainly have no qualms with his well-intentioned wishes and advice. His quote packs a potent punch of sentimental hope. What I'd like to briefly address today is what it means to do good. Because I'm under the assumption that we take for granted the meaning behind the word and assume our conceptions of good are similar, if not identical. While I believe many of us share a similar version of what good looks like, be it some vision of universal happiness through the eradication of racism and poverty, the means by which we desire to meet those ends are, I suspect, wildly different. I'm not endeavoring to deliver an objective definition. All I can offer is my own subjective conception and invite you into a respectful dialogue about what we have in common and where we stand at odds.

I say this because if we leave our beliefs closeted within, I'm unsure how we can ever model what we stand for. With an ever-present tone of respect, we must not converse with the intent of proselytizing, because it is surely very arrogant to disregard all contrary opinions as worthless. If we are blindly accepting any ideology, belief, or point of view, we do an inherent disservice to the critical nature of our minds that IWU has tried to cultivate over the last four years. Here at IWU, we frequently talk about pursuing our passions, but pursuing our passions without question produces faith in a hollow belief. By questioning our own motives and striving to understand others', we fortify our own values and bridge the gap of ignorance that so often separates us. I

think it is a very complex discussion to have, but few if any worthwhile endeavors are born out of complacency or comfort. So here is my take, my very brief take, on what it means to do good:

I believe we begin with transparency and an open mind—transparency about how we plan to do good and an open mind so that we do not allow dissimilar opinions to divide us. So for the sake of transparency, I believe to do good you need to attack the root of the problem instead of engaging in cosmetic charity that strokes our egos. With that being said, I believe in a doing good is a wide-range spectrum that allows for small projects like trash pick up to reside without judgment or rivalry alongside large projects like the Action Research Center's dedication to revitalizing West Bloomington. (That was my plug for Deborah Halperin.) Even though I think the latter makes a more significant impact, we each have a particular capacity to do good. Our capacity isn't static or fixed and we can ramp it up or scale it back as we wish, but ultimately, we decide in what ways we want to do good.

I fear we see doing good as a specific set of tasks that involve charity and volunteerism. The building of houses and serving at soup kitchens certainly do good. They humble us and teach us to have empathy. But doing good is more than an act, it is an outlook on life; an optimistic approach to problem solving that looks at circumstances in terms of assets rather than flaws. Doing good is when a single mother or father must go it alone and doesn't allow their children or themselves to use their adverse circumstance as a crutch. Doing good is when a family in Uganda gives the only white kid in the village a bed and teaches you that happiness is not contingent on cable or wifi. For me the most impactful example of doing good comes from my hero – and for those of you that have heard me talk about Andrew Weishar in the past, I'm sorry, but such a grand figure deserves further mention on a grand stage: When pitted against terminal circumstances, Andrew said, "I'm not done fighting yet." His optimism in the face of seemingly hopeless conditions exemplifies that we can do good, but more importantly, that we must.

I admit that my conception of good is a little different than most, but I urge you to consider it. Because without the sequential layering of optimism, on top of empathy that leads to action, I don't believe we will have the passion or the motivation to do good.

In closing, I believe a fellow academic inspired Minor Myers. Mr. Feeney from *Boy Meets World* said, "Believe in yourself. Dream. Try. Do good." My time at IWU has taught me many things, but as I leave here today, I can't help but realize that the time we are allotted is finite, that life can be fragile, and those that you wish (not a spelling error) to walk besides you during your brief stroll may change course without warning. So let us not create unnecessary forks in the roads over trivial matters, because there are more worthwhile things in the world than unnecessary grudges and willing ignorance. Instead, let us progress forward on a course comprised of the essentials of life that bind us together. Finally, let us bask in a cliché by going forth in the world and doing well, but more importantly, let's go into the world and do good, Class of 2013.