



5-1-2016

Trustee Greetings

George A. Vinyard '71

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Recommended Citation

Vinyard '71, George A., "Trustee Greetings" (2016). *Commencement*. 76.
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Commencement

Trustee Greetings

George A. Vinyard '71

"Scientia et Sapientia + Oliver Sacks + Yogi Berra"

May 1, 2016

Graduates, Parents, Family Members. . . Faculty, Staff, and Friends of Illinois Wesleyan --

Greetings from the Trustees and Alumni. On their behalf I say to each of the Graduates -- Congratulations, Welcome and Thank You.

Congratulations for your individual achievements. Welcome to the fellowship of Illinois Wesleyan Alumni. And Thank You for your contributions to the University community.

To Parents, Family, Friends, Faculty and Staff -- we share your pride in the accomplishments of these young people, and we join them in Thanking You for all you have done to help them on their way to this important occasion.

As an institution of higher learning we strive to help our students develop the intellectual and moral capacity to think deeply about the important things in life and to live in a manner that is consistent with the best values as reflected in our motto -- Scientia et Sapientia -- generally translated as "Knowledge and Wisdom".

Knowledge implies the acquisition of true information and understanding, grounded in objective observation and logical reasoning. Wisdom has been defined as the capacity to exercise sound judgment and act rightly in matters of life and conduct -- choosing proper means to achieve good ends. This requires personal engagement that goes far beyond the search for objective truth and reaches deeper into the realm of what it means to be part of humanity in all its historical, social, esthetic, moral and spiritual dimensions.

For a concrete example of what this means, consider the life and works of Oliver Sacks, the famous neurologist and author who died this past year. Sacks' path to wisdom was based on his intensely detailed observations of his patients and his boundless curiosity about other people and things.

The author of books such as *Awakenings*, and *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, he said this about individuality: "If we wish to know about a [person], we ask 'what is his [or her] . . . real, inmost story?'--for each of us is a . . . story . . . a singular narrative. . . . physiologically, we are not so different from each other; historically, as narratives--we are each of us unique."

In describing his work, Sacks said:

"I always wanted to get people's stories and access to their lives. I feel I'm at the interface of biography and biology, person and person-hood."

And he also remarked:

"In examining disease, we gain wisdom about anatomy and physiology and biology. In examining the person with disease, we gain wisdom about life."

Notably, Sacks made the effort to really get to know Temple Grandin from whom he took the title of his book *An Anthropologist on Mars*, which has been credited with contributing significantly to our understanding of autism and the unique talents and abilities of people on the spectrum.

If every individual is unique as Sacks says, there is wisdom to be derived from each of the innumerable people, living and dead, whose stories are accessible to us.

Witness another sage wordsmith who passed away recently -- the great Yogi Berra, whose deceptively simple-sounding "Yogi-isms" included words that seem quite appropriate for an occasion like this:

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it."

In your time here on campus we trust that you not only developed your intellects but also cultivated the kind of curiosity, perceptiveness and expressiveness that will serve you well as you seek wisdom in the stories of others and choose the paths to your own singular narratives.

May you warmly Remember and Honor your University and your fellow Alumni as part of your story.

May you always think of us as your family and this campus as your home. Please return often. You will always be welcome here -- and wherever Titans gather. Thank you.

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