President Muyskens’ Charge to Class of 2012

There is little I can add to all the good words you have heard today, so I am going to throw away the half hour speech I was going to deliver. Instead, I would like very briefly to say that you students of the class of 2012 have been a remarkable and exceptionally accomplished group, but you are about to become part of an even more accomplished group: the alumni of Queens College.

We like to say that Queens College has been around long enough that its graduates have been helping to shape America and the world for generations, but that we are young enough that members of our first graduating classes still return to campus, as you saw this morning with our honoree Sara McCune and the remarkable men and women of the Queens College class of 1962, the class of 1952, and yes, even members from the class of 1942.

Our graduates include leaders in the worlds of science, business, the arts, government, education, law, medicine, and communications. And I say this not to intimidate you but to tell you that they all once were where you are right now: receiving a Queens College degree and wondering if they would be able to make their dreams come true. Clearly they were able to do so, and so can you as you have that same Queens College degree.

The one other essential piece you need to succeed is hope. So I am charging you today to live your lives with hope.
And there is a great reason to do so as scientists have found that people who live with hope live longer, healthier, less stressful, more successful lives. What more could you possibly want?

And hope is not simply wishing—it is wishing with a spine of steel. Hope is the belief that through hard work we will achieve those things that are most important to us. Hope is tough; it is the force that keeps us reaching for our goals even when others tell us we are doomed to fail.

It is true that we live in difficult times, but few of us have the good fortune to graduate when times are wonderful. When I was a young man in college, there was probably no field in which you were less likely to get a job in than my own field, which is philosophy.

And yet here I am, having had a wonderful career in philosophy and leading a fine college that produces some of our nation’s best students. And this summer at Wimbledon, I will be playing doubles with Roger Federer. Well, perhaps not, but I still hope that one day I will.

In closing, it is my great pleasure to have been a part of the journey that you are completing today.

I wish you all the best in the future.