

## **President's Charge to the Class of 2013**

President Thomas C. Galligan Jr.

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Four years ago when you arrived at Colby-Sawyer College I gave a speech at Convocation welcoming you. If you were not here then because you transferred here later, started earlier, or were off on Global Beginnings, don't worry. You will catch on fast.

That speech was really a letter. It was a letter I had written to my son, Patrick, when he set off for college himself. At the time I was welcoming you to Colby-Sawyer, Patrick was beginning his first year of law school in California. It was another time of transition for him; it was a time of transition for you and your families, so somehow the letter seemed appropriate. Today, Patrick is in his first year of practicing law in San Diego and you—you—are graduating from college. Yet another time of transition for him, and for you and for your families.

As I considered my remarks to you today, I went back and reread that letter again. And, do you know what? Somehow it still seemed appropriate. The advice to Patrick that I originally crafted for him as he set off for college and read to you as you started college seemed to fit. In fact, it fit for me too so, with your permission, I will repeat and reshape that advice this morning.

### ***Get up in the morning***

This is so painfully obvious that it hurts but it is still the best way to start the day. You know the song: "Here Comes the Sun." Well, morning is a nice time of day. There is coffee to make it even nicer, and for you New Englanders there is Dunkin' Donuts. I don't get it but I know you all like it.

Anyway, get up and go to work. Get up and exercise. Get up and read the news so you know what's going on. Get up and do the crossword puzzle. I know you can get up because I have seen many of you do it to get to eight o'clock classes, including mine.

Getting up is perhaps the best way to make sure you get to work on time. Whatever career you choose, sleeping through work is not the best ticket to success, advancement, and fulfillment.

Some people seem to view getting up as something they have to do. Ugh! Don't ugh it; relish it. Getting up makes the day longer. And that makes the part of your life you are awake and engaging in longer. So, get up in the morning.

### ***Go to bed at night***

As I told you four years ago, the best way to enjoy getting up in the morning is to go to bed at night. Actually, these first two bits of advice, taken together, point to a common theme—the life cycle. One part of the life cycle is the day. Get up, live the day, go to bed, get up again the next day—the cycle of the day.

Up until now you have been living your life in another cycle—the cycle of the school year. Start the year in the late summer or early fall. Take a break in December. Start again in January. Finish in May or June. Start the next year in the late summer or early fall.

Now, unless you are going right on to graduate school, that school cycle will stop. That is natural and inevitable, but beware. Beware because the wonderful thing about the school year cycle is that it gives you opportunities to pause and reflect. It gives you opportunities to review and assess yourself and to measure your progress.

A working life is not always like that. There are not always the same cycles and natural breaks to pause, refresh, assess and reassess. So, take those breaks. Take that time. Make sure you reassess. Otherwise, you might look back in 20 years and say wow, where did it go? What did I do? Did I do what I wanted? So, create your own cycles.

***Be receptive to what you like***

This ditty was relevant while you were here because you wanted to make sure you found and studied things you liked and in which you were interested.

Keep it up. Wonderfully, even after today—after graduation from college, you will find new things that interest you, things that you love, some of which you have not yet encountered or even dreamed of.

***Be receptive to the views and backgrounds of other people***

Here at Colby-Sawyer, you have studied with, worked with, learned from, talked to, and teamed up with people from other countries, of different genders, of different races, with different sexual orientations, different ethnicities, different religions, and with varied political, social and moral values.

Continue to celebrate and embrace difference. At the end of the day—whatever categories we put ourselves in, we are all unique. That is one of the things that make life such a curious and wonderful adventure.

***Fall in love***

If you have already taken me up on this one, stay in love. Love people. Love your work. Love ideas. Love a cause. Love your planet—it is the only one you have. Love is what keeps you alive and, even when it does not work out, it is what let's you know you are alive.

I was listening to my friend, Dean of Faculty Deb Taylor, address an alumni group a couple of weeks ago, and she reminded them about what Sigmund Freud said late in his life. “Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness.” Thanks, Siggy, and thanks, Deb.

***Be bold***

Take risks. Don't take crazy risks, but take risks. Go outside your comfort zones. Take risks at work—be willing to risk doing something differently if you think you can do it better. Take risks in your personal life. After all, telling someone you love them the very first time is a risk, but it may be a risk worth taking.

***Always be as honest as you are***

I have met many people in my life who consider themselves brutally honest. Sometimes what they mean is they have no problem telling another person what they think. And, I have found they often have no problem telling another person what they think about him or her or someone else.

I can be good at this too.

What I am not always as good at is being brutally honest with myself. Instead of first asking what could you do, or have done, differently, I might make more progress if I asked myself, what did I do? What could I have done differently?

Remarkably, when I am honest with myself, I find I am more honest with others as well.

### ***Be nice***

You know what. It does not cost anything to be nice. It does not cost anything to show respect for others. It does not cost anything to avoid name-calling. It does not cost anything to hold a door for someone, smile at people, say hello on the street or in the hall or in the market. You can actually make someone's day by smiling at them or sharing a kind word.

Another part of being nice is making friends. There is nothing like friends. They really make life better. I have a little story on this front.

When my wife, Susan, was in your position, graduating from college, she set out for Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she had a job in a savings and loan as a management trainee.

She excelled in her job and her employers told her so. After praising her to the limits, at one of her early performance reviews, the supervisor, the boss, the man, turned to the subject of what, if anything, she could do better.

And what he told her was that she seemed to have a tendency to make friends with the people with whom she worked—the people she supervised—and she had to be careful because she was part of management.

When she told me about it on the phone I was in Washington State in law school at the time. We are both from New Jersey and here she was in Minnesota and I was in Washington, and whenever I went home to New Jersey my father did not understand why all the flights had at least a three-day layover in Minnesota.

Anyway, when Susan told me about the performance review and the supervisor's comment, I asked her what she thought. I didn't know; I was only 23; she was 22, and performance reviews were new to both of us. We were used to grades not performance reviews.

She paused. And, she said: "I guess I don't care. I refuse to not make friends."

Thinking back on it, I am still impressed by how mature she was and how well she knew herself. Her boss was telling her something—no doubt in the utmost good faith—and she was basically rejecting it because she knew herself and what was right for her.

So be nice, make friends.

***Stay great, figure out what makes you happy, and never settle for anything less***

Never settle for anything less. You didn't spend four years here working so hard, finding and pursuing your interests and passions to compromise your happiness now. You nurses didn't go through all those early morning drives to DHMC to settle for less. You business students didn't go through strategic management in order to settle. And none of you went through our Liberal Education Program, your major, your internship and your Capstone just to settle. Our faculty and staff didn't devote themselves to your education and growth here at Colby-Sawyer to have you settle for less than your highest aspirations, your biggest dreams, and your ultimate happiness.

You know that there will be hard times; there will be challenges; there will be ethical and personal dilemmas. There will be sadness. But through it all, find the happiness; dwell in the joy; appreciate the gift; celebrate others. Live your dream. I could not give any better advice, and I would never wish anything less than that for each and every one of you.

Thank you!