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Commencement Speech
Graduate Exercises, Westchester

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Good afternoon President Caputo, trustees, honored guests, officers of administration, faculty, family and friends and the Class of 2003. I am grateful to have the honor of speaking to you this afternoon at the commencement ceremony. Please allow me to share with you some of my thoughts as I come to the end of my degree in the School of Education at Pace University. As I complete my master's degree, I reflect on the ways in which my experience at Pace has prepared me to teach the next generation of leaders.

I think now of how I came to study at Pace University. The summer before my senior year of college, I was working with children in a number of capacities in the New York City area. It was then that I began to ask myself what all young adults ask: "Where am I going with my life? What am I doing?" On a hot summer day, a stranger's vote of confidence helped me answer my questions. The children and I were at Dunkin' Donuts for a snack. As I directed the children to sit at a table, across the crowded room I heard, "You know, you would really be a good teacher." I turned around and a complete stranger smiled at me. He saw a spark in me. His comment echoed the sentiments of loved ones as well as my own inner voice, telling me that I should teach. I've always loved working with children but I wasn't sure where my career path was taking me. Now I knew. I spent my senior year at college taking education courses and I fell in love. I fell in love with the idea of teaching, and I fell in love with the thought that I could be an educator to the next generation. I finally found my passion. Indeed, Pace University is a place where many students "find their passion." Students begin to answer the inevitable question of where they're going with their lives, and they start taking those first steps of their journeys. Whether it is teaching, business, the arts, computers, nursing, or law, we are all leaders. We each bring something unique and special to our learning experiences. We all come from diverse backgrounds and have different philosophies and interests, but I think that's what makes Pace University such a wonderful institution. What I look forward to every week is having the opportunity to go to class and learn from all of my colleagues. They each bring something new and exciting to the table…something I never knew or thought about before. Pace University has given me a special gift…the gift of knowledge and a love of learning. These are two key ingredients that an educator needs to have when he or she goes out into the world to teach.

But, my experience as a student of the School of Education hasn't been just about learning how to teach. I've also learned how to love teaching all children and how to appreciate all of the differences that we encounter on a daily basis. As teachers, we come across issues of diversity everyday in our classrooms. Unfortunately, when diversity is discussed on the news, it often centers on the issue of war. However, as teachers, we are obligated to teach our students that differences should be valued and celebrated, rather than feared and reviled.

In the beginning of each school year, we open a new box of crayons. We don't find just purple crayons, for example, but we find red, green, blue, and many other colored crayons. The pictures that these children draw are pictures of our future, and we have to inspire them to keep coloring, no matter what. We teachers are the sharpeners: we help each crayon, not to change its hue, but to express its own self with the greatest possible delicacy and flair. I want these children to know that they can make a difference and make our future much brighter.

As a teacher, I will pass on my thirst for knowledge and my love of learning to my students. I want them to always keep their

eyes and ears open, so they can take in everything that our world has to offer. I want them to not only be students in my class, but to be students of life. I, myself, will never stop being a student of life. I am forever learning. But as of today, I will also be a teacher. It is now my turn to make a difference and to teach our youth that they can do the same. Even though this is the end of part of my journey, it is the beginning of another part-an exciting part.

I hope that we can all take what we've learned at Pace University and go out into the world to be the leaders that we are. I hope that we all continue to have a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning. May we all be an inspiration to the painters of our future and show them how to work together to color the most beautiful rainbow in the sky. Then, we can look up and see that our future is in good hands. Thank you and good luck to us all.

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