

**Remarks on Leadership  
Alpha Nu Sigma Honor Society Induction  
Excelsior College  
July 8, 2010**

**What Are You Trying To Do?**  
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Good evening. I am privileged to have been invited to be with you. To Professor Jane LeClair and the Board of Trustees for their wisdom in running this institution, and to the faculty for imparting wisdom to the graduates, thank you.

To the graduates and the members of Alpha Nu Sigma Honor Society – I salute you all. In 2008, Excelsior's Student Section received its American Nuclear Society charter, the first virtual ANS student section and the first ANS Student Section comprised primarily of working adult learners. Last year, the ANS approved Excelsior's request to host this chapter meeting of the Alpha Nu Sigma. You are what brings me - us - to this Albany, New York campus tonight.

My question for this evening: What are you trying to do? Actually, you will find this question, and your answers to it, to be a life-long tool.

What are you trying to do? It is one of the easiest questions to ask. And one of the most difficult to answer.

What are you trying to do? Once answered – actually you will answer it many times – the answer will require your leadership to get it done.

Our nation is suffering a crisis of bold leadership. There are two reasons.

The first reason there is a shortage of leaders since there are many issues. We are caught in a blender of historically new forces: clean energy needs, sustainable development, national economic security, and how to address new climate policy requires many leaders for solutions. The longer these issues are debated but not resolved, the more skeptical people become regarding a solution.

The second reason for this crisis is the rise of the anti-leaders, particularly from within most of our universities. It almost seems that they must be injecting students with an anti-leadership vaccine. They tell students to reject the Establishment and its ways, and then let them float idealistically into their ill-defined “perfect society.”

But you graduates of Excelsior College, a private college whose mission is to educate serious adult learners, have been previously steeped in the refiner's fire of reality. And you adult learners are uniquely benefitting from quality instruction by learned adults who are among the leaders of today. They – and I – expect you to become the leaders of tomorrow.

With pride, you should accept your accredited degree in technology, business, liberal arts, and health sciences; and then lead responsibly. You all are leaders. The world needs leaders. But it needs good leaders.

Deposed former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich was a “leader.”

Richard Fuld, the disgraced Chairman of Lehman Brothers was a “leader.”

What differentiates these leaders from the type of leaders that our nation needs is a very important trait: values. Author Robert Greenleaf best identified the three top values of a leader: honesty, love for your people, and responsibility. Let's focus tonight on that value “responsibility.”

Because of your educational process you were responsible for your learning. Not within the physical walls of a campus. Instead you learned solely within the walls of your mind, regardless of your physical location. And you did that as real-world working adults, pursuing personal improvement. I hope you recognize that you now have a challenge to expand your objective of personal improvement to a broader and higher challenge.

Responsible people hold an innate responsibility to build. Build knowledge. Build people. Build institutions.

An irresponsible person destroys. Destroys themselves (eventually). Destroys other people. Destroys the foundations of institutions.

A responsible person will be formed in the decision-making heat of the refiner's crucible. The responsible leader will ask these questions before a major decision:

- How will this affect people?
- Will this advance their lives to a higher plane?
- Will this raise the organization from mediocrity to a distinguished institution?

Simply put, be responsible leaders by:

- Being concerned for your people;
- Being concerned for the institution for which you are working; and,
- Planning how you will continue to grow - what is your driving goal?

What is your answer to tonight's question - What are you trying to do?

Yes, you will be challenged by different jobs, different people, and different experiences. Hey, that's life! But you need that question and your answer in the back of your mind to pull you along.

Before I close my address tonight, I share some sage advice that I learned from the many great nuclear science and technology icons whose paths I have crossed. I most remember these three advisements – and for those of you with Navy experience like me, think of them as additional verses to the “Laws of the Navy”:

- 1) Join a professional society.
- 2) Read.
- 3) Take care of your health.

My advisements:

1) Join a professional society. The difference between a job and a career is getting involved. Earning a degree, is not to “get a job” but to pursue a career. Professional societies allow you to transcend the rank and structure of your workplace by interacting with the diversity of individuals in your profession. It will accelerate your career. So pay the increased ANS dues now that you're no longer a student and get active in ANS. We need your leadership.

2) Read. You are leaving your satellite world of Excelsior – a virtual world – and continuing in an ethereal world of tweets, tweeters, 24-hour news cycle and instant internet information resulting in shallow awareness of even basic subjects. I challenge you with simply this: read one non-fiction book a month. Audio books count. Read or listen to one non-fiction book a month so that you can grow your wisdom.

Read Greenleaf's book titled “On Becoming a Servant Leader,” for a different view of leadership.

Read about military leadership in Colonel David H. Hackworth's book titled, “About Face.”

Read about environmental leadership in “Prescription for the Planet” by Tom Blees to see an integrated, painless way this planet can have all the energy it needs.

Lou Holtz, the past coach of Norte Dame said:

"The only things that change you from where you are today to where you are going to be five years from now are the people you meet and the books you read."

3) Take care of your health. Good health does not just take care of itself. Good health is most often lost by simply assuming that it will.

Your health has two inter-related facets, mental and physical.

Regarding your mental health, become a meditator. Regarding your physical health –just plain exercise.

Your performance will be determined and evaluated by not only your mental abilities but by the support system that carries around the bastion of those abilities – your brain. Exercise, eat well, meditate, and, yes, get your sleep.

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, “Here’s what I think about that”:

- Professional Societies – join ’em.
- Read – one non-fiction book a month.
- Take care of your health – meditate and move.

To the new members of the Alpha Nu Sigma Honorary Society, I expect you to grow into leadership and into leaders. Learn to lead collectively through people, through the organizations of which you are a part.

I close tonight with my answer to the question: What are you trying to do?

The answer for me it is to build a U.S. nuclear reactor that will help meet our nation’s burgeoning energy needs, promote our national security by producing energy from weapons-grade plutonium, and support environmental preservation by recycling used nuclear fuel.

Your answer to that question will come more readily because you have each responded to Excelsior College President Ebersole’s call in last week’s Wall Street Journal advertisement to make higher education a national priority.

As Daniel Burnham, the famous architect and urban planner who designed beautiful buildings such as Union Station in Washington, D.C., stated more than 90 years ago: “Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans.”

I wish you all a successful life!