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### Commencement Advice that Stands the Test of Time

St. Norbert College

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Pay attention to Commencement addresses, because many are quite insightful.

# Commencement Advice That Stands the Test of Time

Many of us remember the famous Commencement address that began with, “Wear sunscreen. If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it.” Actually, that speech was penned by a columnist wishing she could deliver it as a Commencement address. She never did give that speech, but there are plenty of real Commencement addresses that resonate today as much as they did when given. Here are snippets from a few that are regarded as among the best.

### John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, at American University (1963)

“Our problems are manmade – therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man’s reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable – and we believe they can do it again.”

### Bono, U2 Lead Vocalist, at University of Pennsylvania (2004)

“What’s the big idea? What’s your big idea? What are you willing to spend your moral capital, your intellectual capital, your cash, your sweat equity in pursuing outside of the walls of the University of Pennsylvania? The world is more malleable than you think and it’s waiting for you to hammer it into shape.”

### Steve Jobs, Co-founder and CEO of Apple, at Stanford University (2005)

“I’m convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You’ve got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle.”

### Oprah Winfrey, Media Mogul, at Stanford University (2008)

“If it doesn’t feel right, don’t do it. That’s the lesson. And that lesson alone will save you, my friends, a lot of grief. Even doubt means don’t. This is what I’ve learned. There are many times when you don’t know what to do. When you don’t know what to do, get still, get very still, until you do know what to do.”

### Ellen DeGeneres, Comedian, at Tulane University (2009)

“It was so important for me to lose everything, because I found out what the most important thing is, is to be true to yourself. Ultimately, that’s what’s gotten me to this place. I don’t live in fear, I’m free. I have no secrets and I know I’ll always be OK, because no matter what, I know who I am.”

### George Saunders, Syracuse University English Professor, at Syracuse University (2013)

“What I regret most in my life are failures of kindness. Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded ... sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly ... Do all the other things, the ambitious things – travel, get rich, get famous, innovate, lead, fall in love, make and lose fortunes, swim naked in wild jungle rivers (after first having it tested for monkey poop) – but as you do, to the extent that you can, err in the direction of kindness.”

March 12, 2020



## Generally Speaking

Brig. Gen. Jill A. (Beaudoin) Lannan '85 is St. Norbert College's 2020 Commencement speaker. Lannan is the 13th SNC graduate to attain the rank of general, and the first SNC woman to earn her star. Lannan was commissioned into the United States Army, where she served until 1992. Since 1993, she has been serving in the Washington Air National Guard and today is the Air National Guard assistant to the commander, 24th Air Force, based in Texas.

## Commencement 2020

Have questions about Commencement? Find all of your answers on our [Commencement webpage](#).

## Also in This Issue

This article first appeared in the March 2020 issue of Parents of St. Norbert College. Other features in this edition included:

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100 Grant Street  
De Pere, WI 54115  
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