

## REMARKS FOR COMMENCEMENT 2008

### President Ham Shirvani

Good morning Class of 2008!

I am pleased that we have such a beautiful, cool morning for all of you – graduates, parents, families, and friends – to enjoy this ceremony that represents a milestone in all of our graduates' lives. I look forward to this day every year as we get to celebrate accomplishments and look forward to what lies ahead.

Today, you are graduating at a time when the broad social context presents some difficult challenges. The nature and condition of the market is plummeting, record numbers of foreclosures have led to a severe housing crisis, and government funding of prisons receives greater priority than funding for public education.

The price of oil has driven gas to over \$4 a gallon, the health care crisis is growing due to unaffordable insurance, the number of homeless people is increasing, and the environment is suffering from global warming.

There are also a number of international issues that have a profound impact on the environment you are entering as a graduate – everything from violence in conflicts around the world to world hunger and environmental turbulence.

Considering all of this, many of you may think that you are graduating from college at the worst possible time.

**BUT**, despite our current troubles both domestically and internationally, I want you to know that you are *actually* graduating at the **BEST** possible time. **It is in times like these that you can find golden opportunities to be an instrument of change and to make an impact in your world.**

To make a *lasting* impact, there are certain guidelines and requirements that must be followed.

1. First, resist infatuation with commodities and material goods. Don't give into the societal pressure for acquiring the latest and greatest product or the most popular brand.
2. Focus on working hard. No matter where your journey takes you after today, continue to exercise the self-discipline and persistence you needed to succeed at California State University, Stanislaus. Be productive and responsive. Deliver more than is expected. Don't settle for satisfactory work. Do your very best!
3. Remember that society doesn't owe you anything. Everything we have is a privilege, and you are the most privileged because you have a college education. Many people

envy you because they can only dream of going to college and earning a degree. Be proud of your educational accomplishment, and remember that you are privileged.

4. Share, give, and serve! Yes - Make money. Build wealth. Have a nice quality of life for you and your family – the best that you desire. But as you build your career and strive for success, incorporate giving back to others. Pursue selfless acts of service and good will.
5. Finally, be engaged. It is my hope that during your years at California State University, Stanislaus, you adopted a pervasive culture of engagement that you will carry forward into your lives and careers. You weren't here just to get a diploma so you could get a job. You were also here to explore issues deeply, to build close-knit relationships, to get involved in campus life and the surrounding community. Continue pursuing endeavors that require full engagement and commitment.

If you follow these guiding principles and turn them into daily habits, you truly will be an individual who leaves a mark on this world, a man who impacts the people around him, a woman who serves as an instrument of change.

So regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, you are walking up to this platform today prepared to be the leaders of our future with tremendous opportunities to be instruments of change and to impact our world.

Congratulations on your outstanding achievement!!