

Student Lasallian Commencement Address  
December 2009  
Presented by: Cody Roberts

Good afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family and friends.

It has been said that with great challenge comes great success and opportunity!

In the early 1700's a French priest by the name of John Baptist De La Salle founded dozens of schools to provide an education to the poor in the complacent, class-based educational system in France. He organized a religious order of men committed to teaching practical skills to the less fortunate so that they could be productive members of society. Many years later, De La Salle was recognized as a Saint by the Catholic Church for his accomplishments and service to the poor. However, these successes did not occur without great challenges!

When De La Salle was a university student, his parents died suddenly, and he found himself responsible for the care of his younger siblings. Through perseverance and determination John Baptist De La Salle continued his education, and managed these new responsibilities while also pursuing the call to ministry and service that he believed God had given to him.

Saint John Baptist De LaSalle changed education throughout Europe by providing opportunities for the poor to embrace their given right to an education. He, along with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, integrated Christian values into their teaching, and also demonstrated a sincere commitment to the success and well-being of the students entrusted to their care.

Today, those who teach in Lasallian schools like Lewis University carry on that tradition of infusing values into the curriculum and focusing on the growth and success of students like us.

At times I have also found myself faced with great challenges. I remember a time when I was unsure if obtaining a collegiate education was even going to be a possibility for me in my life. However, with great determination and sacrifice it was made possible! When I had made the decision to overcome these challenges I found myself embracing values similar to the values of De La Salle. These were values of vision, mission and purpose. Like many of us, I faced the challenge of balancing a job with academic life. Having embodied these values gave me the motivation to succeed academically hoping that the knowledge I have obtained would not only transform my life but transform the lives of others.

During my time in China as a David L. Boren Scholar I was both a student and a teacher. I was able to share these values to many through cultural exchange, and I realized that these values are what have made our country so great. It is values that have transformed the most challenging situations into the greatest successes.

Like De La Salle, many in this room have faced challenges in their lives. Some of you have felt the impact of the recession, as it has resulted in reduced Federal and state financial aid, and increased educational expenses for many of us. Some of you have struggled to manage family, work, and other responsibilities. Despite these challenges, we have **all** made it to this important day in our lives. With great challenge comes great success and opportunity!

Today, with an economic recession at hand, an arguably failing health care system, a struggling educational system, and many more institutional, political, and economic hardships; we now face a world of unprecedented challenges. However, these challenges can lead us to great opportunity! The opportunity is for us to embrace

the challenges of our time; just as John Baptist De La Salle did, and become change makers.

I believe that as we leave here today informed by our Lasallian values, it is our responsibility to use our Lewis education and our experiences here to create change in our world that will make a positive difference in the lives of others, to provide solutions for society's problems, and to demonstrate values-based leadership in the organizations, institutions, and systems in which we will work.

With great challenges come great opportunities! Class of December 2009, congratulations!