

**Phi Kappa Phi Induction Ceremony Invited Speech  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA  
April 6, 2014**

**Our Outstanding UMass Amherst Students**

**Good morning and a very warm welcome to everyone!**

**Congratulations to the students who are being inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Society today! We are so proud of you and so happy for you.**

**It is an honor and pleasure to be speaking to you today on this special occasion. You represent the best and brightest of all the academic disciplines.**

**The theme of my talk is, fittingly, *Our Outstanding UMass Amherst Students*.**

**UMass Amherst has graduated many outstanding individuals. You have all heard of Dr. Cady Coleman, the astronaut and veteran of multiple space missions, who has advised the movie star Sandra Bullock in her role in the movie *Gravity*. We all know of our alum, Jack Welch, the former CEO and Chairman of GE, and Jack Smith, the former CEO and Chairman of General Motors. I am sure that some of you also recognize Gene Isenberg, the CEO and Chairman of the Board of Nabors Industries for close to a quarter of a century, who passed away last month. During Isenberg's leadership, Nabors grew from bankruptcy to a company with an enterprise value exceeding \$9 billion. The Isenberg School of Management is named after him because of his support and generosity towards UMass.**

**These individuals are just 4 of the many outstanding graduates who have made a mark on our great world. I am privileged to have met each of them.**

**However, I would like to share with you a few stories of several of the students that I have taught at UMass. They also represent what is so special about you and the other UMass Amherst students – in terms of work ethic, intellectual curiosity, and creativity.**

**There was Kevin, in the first class that I ever taught at UMass. It was in the evening MBA program, then taught in Holyoke. I had to carry my PhD diploma since I had students in the class who were**

**30+ years my senior and thought that I was too young to be a professor. Kevin sparkled and had not yet been admitted to our MBA program. He was being *tested* and his performance in my class was critical. Kevin worked as a bagger at Louis, a downtown Amherst supermarket located where CVS is now. Kevin had such charisma and intelligence I knew that he would fit into our MBA program. Since graduating, he has risen through the ranks at Ford and has an amazing career. I see him regularly when he visits his daughter who is now a student at Isenberg. Like her dad, she thrives at UMass. While Kevin has the phone numbers of CEOs of many firms on his cellphone, he recounts how he once closed a major deal while he and his counterpart reminisced about their days of living in Southwest!**

**There is Christina, who graduated summa cum laude just over a decade ago. She was in the first cohort of the Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Award recipients. Christina did an honors thesis and conducted research with me under an NSF REU grant at the Virtual Center for Supernetworks. Since graduation, she has worked for GE, Deloitte Consulting, and several startups in NYC. She continues to give back and was recently a speaker at our inaugural Women in Business conference. In June, in Boston, she will be honored with the Isenberg School's Young Alumna Business Leadership Award.**

**There is Jose, one of ten children, who was born in Cape Verde. Jose received 5 degrees from UMass Amherst, from 3 different colleges, including an MBA and PhD from the Isenberg School. Jose is now a tenured professor and award-winning teacher at UCONN. He is educating a new generation of students and his research on supply chain sustainability and corporate social responsibility is making a wide positive impact.**

**There is Stavros, who came to UMass from Greece and somehow made it, despite the fact that his application was initially lost. He received his PhD and is now managing a fund of hedge funds in London valued at over \$10 billion. He had met Mandela, knows Bill Clinton, and has shared stories about dining with world leaders on various continents. However, he tells people that his happiest days were when he was a student at UMass Amherst (a theme that I hear time and time again from other alums).**

**And there is Longjie, who received an undergraduate degree here a few years ago. After a stint in industry, he has returned for his Master's degree. Longjie has an incredible curiosity and, a few years ago, I received an email message from him. He had been reading articles in major newspapers on a reported study on the Braess**

**paradox in Boston and on tolls and said that he did not understand what was novel about this since he had learned about these in my Logistics & Transportation class. And, he was right! When I investigated the source on which this "news" was based, I came upon an article in a major physics journal where proper attribution was not given to preceding research. I wrote a letter to the editor of the journal, and eventually an erratum was published. I also wrote a letter to the editor of *The Economist*, which was noted by the producers of the World Science Festival in NYC, who invited me to speak on the *Traffic* panel. All because of the curiosity, attention, and integrity of one of my former undergraduates at UMass Amherst!**

**These stories are typical of the successes of UMass graduates. You are here today because you have the intellectual curiosity, stamina, energy, and work ethic to continue to excel. If, in a decade or so, we meet again, I'm sure that each of you will have a similar story to the 8 UMass grads I just spoke of. You will also remember the great experiences that you had at UMass.**

**Congratulations to all of you on your induction into the Phi Kappa Phi Society today. I wish you all much happiness and success and remember that you will always be part of the great UMass Amherst academic family! I am sure that you will make your families, friends, and professors very proud with your continuing achievements and success!**

**We wish you all the best! And remember, if you ever need a recommendation letter for grad school or a job, you know where to find us!**

## **Anna Nagurney**

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