

Oh My Goodness, Aye Dios Mio ---I'm so Thankful to be here, witnessing this special night with your most beloved family, fans and friends—you the A&M-San Antonio CLASS OF 2015—Look around to the person next to you -- YOU MADE IT!

To the A&M-San Antonio faculty, staff, students and alumni- I am humbled, honored and overjoyed to take part in this page in the history of our emerging university. And it's moments like this and graduates like you that rekindle our souls and bring pride to our entire community.

To the citizens of our great city of San Antonio and the State of Texas, tonight serves as a symbol that universities are places of public purpose—and stewards of the public trust. The vision of strong leaders like the legacy of Texas State Senator Madla, President Emerita Maria Ferrier and the A&M Board of Regents brought to life a long-awaited investment so that Texas A&M would emerge from an undeveloped field in South Side San Antonio as a place that will forever bring about change and inspiration for generations of learners throughout our city, throughout Texas and throughout the World.

It is my hope that I will provide a source of inspiration for anyone who was unsure and courageously chose the path of this educational journey. I've been there. As an undergraduate, I too had no idea what it meant to be a “college student” and no idea how to handle the overwhelming demands and rigor of college life and no idea how to ever repay manageable student loans,— with no source of stable income. Just like many of you in the Class of 2015, I've been a motivated, faithful student continuously learning, pushing, and wringing out every ounce of energy to advance my education, even when it meant sacrificing income or sacrificing precious time with family and loved ones. Always betting on myself, my future and my capabilities, I've preciously clung to the ideal that my parents shared when they told me, a young 8-year old that “education was the foundation for a better life.” Neither of them had the opportunity to go to college neither ever imagined what my life would be like if I earned a 4 year degree, nonetheless an MBA or a doctorate—but they wisely knew—hard work and transmitting this unwavering laser-like will to learn would reap rewards that they could never have imagined. Although my parents are not able to join us this evening, I want to publicly say “thank you” to my parents and all the parents in the room who have shared that unwavering spirit to inspire your sons and daughters to excel. THANK YOU.

I consider today a defining milestone in my own journey. Admittedly, I have a “driven, hard-charging, type-A personality” –I've had a relentless determination—pushing, pushing, pushing myself to work harder to make a difference in all that I've touched personally and professionally and to intrinsically carry this “desire” and to also encourage the willpower of those around me to push themselves to be more than they thought possible.

For the short time I have with you, I want to share a few lessons learned and offer a vision about what your degree from this great institution Texas A&M-San Antonio means for your future.

Lesson One – Stretch Yourself!

It has become crystal clear to me that as new graduates—you have the power to change the world. I don't mean this to be cliché—I challenge you to imagine your life (right now, close your eyes and IMAGINE) Where are you – Where do you want to be – where do you NEED to be in the next 5 years, the next 10 years and the next 20 years. Stretch yourself--what do you see? In a perfect world, you would be really good at everything you need to have a successful personal and professional life. Then again, in an ideal world, we would all have gorgeous hair, six-pack abs, and a winning mega-jackpot lottery ticket. Truly, the “ideal world”, YOUR ideal work is a life inspired by authenticity, by using your degree as the foundation for an inspired life. Stretch yourself.

Wherever the road takes you, having graduated from Texas A&M-San Antonio will be your foundation for countless future successes. Each of you have special talents and some in this room will become teachers, lawyers, doctors, principals, scientists, political leaders, superintendents, CEOs and yes, University presidents. Whatever your chosen profession, your life will be based on the fundamental truth of who you are. Your humanity, personal characteristics and inner-drive will make up your winning formula!

Lesson Two – Hard Work

My fundamental truth began at a young age. When I was 8 years old my parents told me “You're going to college—as a young girl in South side San Antonio, I had no idea what that really meant.” But I knew from that early age, it meant I had to work hard in school to be “ready for college.” My dad would say “your grades will always follow-you, meija, so they have to be the best you can earn;” and after college earning “good grades, transcended to “achieving excellence at work.” My winning formula has always included **hard work**.

Lesson Three – live by your fundamental truth

At the young age of 13, I witnessed the unthinkable. Eric, my 5 year old next door neighbor was struck and killed by a school bus in a tragic accident. I vividly recall a counseling session with the local priest, I struggled to understand how or why such a travesty could be flung onto a loving-caring family. Shortly thereafter I was called in by the local school district to be deposed. As a bewildered teenager, I had no idea what to expect. What I do remember, is that I was told it was important to be **truthful** about every detail that I could recall. Now, some 35+ years later, looking back I recognize that it was my first exposure into the complexity of large institutional systems. I never dreamed I'd go on to serve and lead a large complex institution such as a university. More importantly it was an early defining moment, for what I now understand to be personal integrity and the importance of the truth. Over the course of many years, I observed the impact of that horrible accident on the lives of Eric's family. Eric's fate and the loss his family endured has resonated with me and became an influencer in shaping the fundamental truth of who I am. For me, this fundamental truth includes making a **difference in the lives of others and to do so with unconditional kindness, acceptance, and living life as if each day was my last**. I don't pretend to understand what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes or feel someone else's pain because I have no context for what or how others have experienced life. This far-reaching lens has helped me to frame a positive outlook and to be thankful for what I have, each and every day.

I challenge you first and foremost to understand your fundamental truth. In your journey, you must discover your fundamental truth, your purpose, your service in life. This will evolve and sharpen its focus as you continue to grow. Over time, your interactions personal and professional will compound on your life's experiences, one by one, your fundamental truth will become crystal clear to you and will help define your success.

Lesson Four – Define Your Winning Formula

Within your self-exploration you will discover, you too, have a winning formula. We all do. That winning formula shapes the traits that will guide your unique talents. As I mentioned hard work is part of my winning formula, so is an overwhelming desire to learn and to excel in whatever I do. You must deliberately seek out and create your winning formula—what is it that lights the fire within you to serve your world? What is your talent that you will use to make a difference in your life and that of others? That is what you need to discover. The effect that your fundamental truth and your winning formula will have on others is part of the valuable currency that is within you. I challenge you to always present your best self to your family, your employers, your community and everywhere you go and in all that you do; AND always represent our university Texas A&M-San Antonio with your signature winning formula. You now belong to a legacy as a Texas A&M- San Antonio Alumn—and we are counting on you to be audacious with all of your Jaguar Pride in every path that you take.

Lesson Five – Embrace Challenges

Now, Class of 2015 on a more difficult note I realize that at some point you'll stumble, maybe some of you already have, I CERTAINLY have; that's part of life. At some point you will experience challenges, setbacks, roadblocks; embrace those challenges for they will influence the evolution, as you discover who you are and who you continue to become.

Always remember --there are no failures in life—these experiences when you're down on the ground or face self-doubts, are just fleeting moments that will shape you and help you blaze a new trail. Use these challenges as opportunities to absorb knowledge from every mistake, every incident, every interaction—these lessons force you to hone in on your fundamental truth and will shape you to become a more polished and defined YOU. This is part of your winning formula.

Now, Class of 2015, you may have thought your papers and exams, were done...Hmmmmm I have one final exam question for you—and there's no WRONG answer. Here it is: What's the next best professional move for you? Today's world is hyper-fast, information-driven with an abundance of opportunities and choices— we live in a great country where anything and everything is possible. Today, college graduates, like yourself, are prepared for jobs that have not yet been invented! Your critical thinking skills applied in this complex world will help you navigate for uncharted careers. Maybe you'll invent a new industry—whatever you do, it probably won't happen by accident. Imagine with me, for a moment, your life guided by a built-in mobile app-- not like Siri on your iPhone, but more, like a fitbit w/your personal avatar, tracking your every movement, your every thought, and automatically

recalculating the most ideal path for your life-journey. Allow your mobile-app to programmatically guide you to pure perfection! Pretty cool and audacious thought, huh?

Well, even with that perfect backdrop—the mobile app within you (slowly) cannot predict perfection without a plan. The hard-coding simply cannot occur—that internal mobile app will create the ideal algorithm AFTER you articulate goals. You see, without a thoughtful well-executed plan, you are just wasting time—and guess what--you won't ever GET THAT TIME BACK. As the great Maya Angelou says “All great achievements require time.” Make time to deliberately establish your goals and priorities. Make time to reevaluate your goals and priorities.

So today, graduation day, push your mental “reset” button—re-set or re-boot yourself to move forward with a heart filled with positive energy and the will to embrace continuous learning in your life. Allow yourself to open the door in your head—and then when the door opens—visualize yourself walking through it! Go forth and do!

And now, for the last and final lesson Six – be Audacious.

Find that something inside you, that brings you to life to become the most powerful truthful version of your best self—that is the unstoppable combination of your **fundamental truth and your winning formula.**

You will face difficult situations , stress and conflict, listen and trust your internal self...you will be happy and successful with financial means. Share what you can with those less fortunate, surround yourself with positive energy, be AUDACIOUS, invent a new industry, embrace your community generously share your talents and will yourself to make a difference—aspire to change one little piece of the world. I have and I challenge you to do the same. Congratulations and good luck!