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Thank you Dr. Holbrook for that heart-felt introduction and thank you Chancellor Ayers for always being a beacon of light for this University.

Distinguished faculty, staff, proud parents, family, friends and to you graduates of this 90th anniversary of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

This is an extraordinary honor for me to stand before you and to share some words with you that will be both inspirational and meaningful as you prepare for the journey beyond Embry-Riddle. Let me start off by saying that life is nothing more than a series of unexpected moments; moments that will be life-changing and will set the stage for you both personally and professionally.

Had someone told me that two decades after leaving Embry-Riddle, that I would be developing and/or managing the protective security programs for the CEOs of Google, Facebook and Whatsapp, I would not have believed it for a minute. But that is what happened in an instant. I found myself in face-to-face conversations and interactions with these CEOs and their families, traveling to various parts of the world and managing executive protection teams for these clients.

My life has been in the fast lane ever since, but as I look back over the years, I realize how important my decision was to attend Embry-Riddle. This University is so much more than the degree programs that it offers to its students. Embry-Riddle has been the foundational structure for my entire career path.

Twenty-eight years ago, I sat where you are now seated. And like all of you, I had a plan. My plan was simple; I wanted to work for the Drug Enforcement Administration, the DEA, specifically the Air Wing Unit. The only problem was that I did not have a job offer after returning home to the Bay Area after graduation.

I remember the days and weeks that followed after returning home. My mother, who is here today with my father and family, would always tell me to relax and to rest because, as she put it, I had been working hard during my four years at Embry-Riddle. What my mother failed to understand was that I had just returned from a high-drive environment; the same one that currently exist on campus. My life went from a sprint to hitting a brick wall, which was something that I was not used to. This University had positively consumed my time inside and outside of the classroom. It taught me the meaning of time and project management, self-discipline and to be the best version of myself.

As I waited patiently for a response from the DEA, I had decided to look for a job, any job, so that I could keep busy like I had been in Prescott. I remember working for a temporary employment agency that sent me to various job assignments. These were jobs that had nothing to do with my degree program. But I would later appreciate the reasons for taking these jobs and understand why they would play an important role in my life years later.

A few months had passed and I had received a phone call from Ben Beagle, who was one of my professors and Flight Team Advisors. Ben was retired and had opened up an air charter company in the Grand Canyon; Windrock Aviation. He asked me if I had heard anything from DEA. When I told him that I was still waiting, that's when he, to my surprise, offered me a job as a pilot for his company. After giving the job offer some thought, I decided to take the job and agreed to start that summer.

And then, one month later, I received a call from a fellow Embry-Riddle and Flight Team brother who was now a DEA Agent. It turned out that he was in Washington DC for training and asked me if I had heard anything on my application to which I replied, "No." The next day, he went to Personnel to make an inquiry and was told that my application was in Backgrounds in a stack of 2000 applications and that it would be approximately 3 years before my application was to be reviewed. This is where networking and relationships come into play. My friend put in a good word for me and Personnel agreed to review my application the next day. Two weeks later, I received a call from DEA and was given the job offer that I had been waiting for.

I was now sitting on two job opportunities; one with DEA and the other as a pilot in the Grand Canyon. I decided to accept the offer from DEA, but I thanked Ben for his generous offer in considering me to be a part of his operation.

Over the years, I found myself deviating from my original plan to fly and felt gravity pulling me in a different direction as other opportunities came my way. After leaving the DEA, I accepted a position with the San Francisco 49ers and worked on the executive protection detail for the DeBartolo family. That led me to other security assignments working in the Silicon Valley during the Dot.com era.

Two months after 9/11, I accepted a position as the Senior Director of Worldwide Corporate Security & Safety for Sybase, now SAP. My goals and deliverables presented its own set of challenges, which were enormous in task, but not impossible. I was able to develop a comprehensive global security program for the corporation, because of one reason and one reason only. The skillset that I had acquired outside of the Embry-Riddle classroom was a contributing factor to my success in the corporate world.

After four successful years with Sybase, I began to look for a new challenge; one that would push me to a different level. Not long thereafter, I found myself managing the Residential Security Program for the CEO of Google at his estate in Palo Alto.

Two years later, I founded Urban Tactical Group and secured our biggest client ever, Facebook, which we are beginning our 6th year with them. I even hired my first GSIS graduate who is now an EMT on our Facebook team.

As I look back over the years, I attribute much of my success to my parents and Embry-Riddle. Without both, I would not be standing here at this podium. The values that both have instilled in me are the means to how I manage my business operation. When I think of the years that I spent at Embry-Riddle, there was always a strong sense of community and the feeling of family. One individual who is responsible, in part, for nurturing this concept has been our Dean of Students, Larry Stephan. Larry has been a very visible person on campus over the past 3 decades and he subscribes to a unique set of values that are absolutely priceless. Thank you Larry for somehow managing to adopt all of us into your family.

Graduates, I shared my story with you today in hopes that you will know that there is a bigger plan out there for you that you have yet to discover. I could not be where I am today had I not had the opportunities come my way at the time that they did. I never could understand why my life was taking a course in a different direction at the time that it was happening. But as I look back, I can see with much vision and clarity that I had to experience everything in that specific order of events in order to enjoy the benefits of my current position.

In life, you will be presented with a variety of opportunities that will require your decision. Before you make any decision, always consider the enjoyment of the position. Never accept a job solely on the salary. Strive for jobs that give you a balance between your work and family time.

Remember that no job is below you. You may have to work various jobs before you land that dream job. These jobs may be humbling but they build character and give you an appreciation for what you have so that you can be the best pilot, engineer, security and intelligence specialist, military officer, business person or whatever you aspire to be.

When you go out into the world, be the best version of yourself. You are your resume; Let people see who you really are. And always know that the world, which we live in is quite large but the industry in which we serve and work is relatively small. Always maintain positive relationships because you never know when you may cross paths again with your former work associates. Leave a positive impression wherever you go.

Graduates, as you prepare to move beyond this University, remember that your connection to Embry-Riddle will be a permanent one. This University will always be with you regardless of where you go in life.

As I come to a close, I would like to share a few words written two years prior from my son Emilio because I feel that these words are appropriate for this special occasion.

Graduates of 2016, I call on you not just to seize today, but to seize all of the days ahead of you. Seize upon every opportunity that you are given in your lifetime. Seize your gifts and your talents and use them to make a positive impact in the lives of others. Seize upon the examples of men and women who inspire you to good in this world. Seize upon your education for it is the key to your future and the future of our society. Seize upon your dreams and allow them to inspire those around you.

Congratulations to all of you and may God Bless you in all that you do beyond Embry-Riddle! Thank you.