

“True · Good · Beauty”

**The 2011 Sino-American Joint Program Commencement Ceremony at
the Ningbo Institute of Technology (NIT), Zhejiang, China
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President Jin, Party Secretary Fei, Vice President Yang, distinguished faculty and staff, proud parents, and especially, the graduates of the University of Indianapolis–Ningbo Institute of Technology Joint Program Cohort 7, Class of 2011. I am deeply honored to bring greetings today on behalf of the president of the University of Indianapolis, Dr. Beverley Pitts, and on behalf of the University’s faculty. President Pitts offers her best wishes for a wonderful commencement ceremony and acknowledges her plan to visit your campus in September. I am also pleased to introduce Dr. John Langdon, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Langdon has been working closely with me on our joint program, and I am glad Dr. Langdon is here today.

This is our joint program’s fourth commencement. Again, it is with great pride and a sense of privilege that I participate in this ceremony at NIT on this day of celebration. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to work closely with NIT leaders, faculty, and staff over the last few years in the pursuit of a common goal: making our Sino-American joint program one of the best in China.

I especially would like to mention that I had the opportunity to work with President Jin on several occasions this year and I admire his vision and support for our international collaboration. We were much honored that he led the NIT delegation to attend the Commencement and the Senior Banquet held at the University of Indianapolis on May 7. He met many of our NIT joint program students, and he was very pleased with the way these students have been “transformed.” President Jin has pledged to expand our two universities’ collaboration. He has a good vision for the future of NIT, and he stressed that our joint program has played a very important strategic role in the delivery of high-quality education for the NIT students. On behalf of the University of Indianapolis, I also pledge to President Jin and all of you that we will rise to the horizon together. We will provide for our joint program students the best education anyone can imagine having.

I also have been working closely with Professor Xu Weimin, who has just retired from his distinguished posts at NIT as the former president and the party secretary in April. I was very fortunate to have the opportunities to work with Professor Xu in the last few years on our joint program, and most

recently, I was privileged to co-author a book with him on service-learning to be published by the esteemed Zhejiang University Press. In addition, we will co-chair the Fourth International Symposium on Service-Learning, which will be held at NIT in September. I would like to take this opportunity to express my admiration for Professor Xu's scholarship and leadership.

This is a very special year for NIT. It is the year of NIT's 10th anniversary. Dear graduates, you are part of NIT's growth and its success story. You should be proud of NIT, as NIT is proud of you.

While celebrating your graduation, we must remember that there are many people who are behind you and beside you. They work with you and they support you. We must express our deepest gratitude to your parents, teachers, and close friends. Without their assistance, caring, and encouragement, you would not have accomplished what you have accomplished today.

My dear graduates, you are ready to step onto your new life path. Whether you will continue to pursue your graduate studies, to get married, or to enter into the job market, you will always encounter change in your living environment. You have received two years of American education at the University of Indianapolis or with American professors at NIT. Our educational goals have been to educate you to embrace creativity, critical thinking, performance, and social responsibility. You have attained these goals, and we hope you can start putting your new tools to practical use. They will become your life tools. With these tools, you shall be able to make a difference, not only in your own life but also in the community where you live, where you work, and where you visit as a tourist. With your newly gained knowledge, skills, and most of all, the values that you have learned or reinforced, you are bound to ask a question, "How can I make a better place to live, to work, or to visit?"

People speak of going out and changing the world; this is silly. One person does not change the world. One person can, however, change the community in which he or she lives—the small world in which a person operates. A person can easily have an effect on the local community, the town, the city, the neighborhood in which he or she resides. How can you make a difference? How can you improve the lives of those around you with the gift that you have been given? These are some of the questions you should ask yourself.

There are many goals people have in life: graduating from college is one of them. You have done this today. Getting a good job is another goal for many: this is something that many of you will strive to do in the coming months. A goal that is not shared by many, to society's detriment, is striving to improve the community where you live. What is interesting is that these goals are linked inextricably. Students with college degrees get good jobs; people with good jobs have more resources available to make a difference in the community. You should not only be the locomotive but also the transformer of your community. Many of you experienced community-service projects while you were at UIndy. NIT also has started to launch these projects in the last few years. We hope you carry on the spirit of service even after graduation. Your community needs your expertise and experience in service.

The phrase “making a difference in the community” has been referenced multiple times already. What does this actually entail, though? How does one make a difference? Help the needy, volunteer, recycle, and donate items to others in more need than you. These are not grandiose actions, but they have the effect of making a difference in others’ lives, which is more important than an action that serves only to gain notoriety. John F. Kennedy, an American president in the 1960s, once stated, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” This is a powerful quotation; it signifies that we, as citizens of a country and especially as college graduates, have obligations to that country, and more importantly, to the other inhabitants that reside here with us.

There is a global problem with the youth today. In America and in China, we call your generation the “me generation.” Young people care about themselves almost too much. Young people tend to be self-oriented. Instead of this “me generation,” we should seek to be other- and service-oriented. Thinking of others and acting to improve others’ lives is crucial to the development and growth of a modern society. In this competitive world, it is inevitable for your generation to become self-oriented. But today, I would like to share with you a quotation that reflects my life philosophy. It may prompt you to think deeply or puzzle you: “Always think of yourself less, but do not think less of yourself.” Dharma Master Cheng Yen (Tzu Chi), who was one of *Time* magazine’s 100 most influential people in the world in 2011, said, “To give selflessly with a genuine heart is to be true. To contribute to others unconditionally is to be good. When one is both true and good, beauty is radiated.” I hope you will be that “beautiful person” someday.

You are very fortunate to have received two sets of education (Chinese and American) and to have received two sets of degrees (NIT and UIndy). You have the freedom to choose. What you have chosen today will become part of you tomorrow. We hope you will make the best use of your dual assets and to continue on the path of greater learning, commitment to serving your community, and resilience to the ever-changing and challenging world.

Once again, what a great joy it is to be here with all of you, celebrating the great achievements of those who are graduating on this occasion. You will be the movers and shakers and the promising leaders in a society where you will encounter many things that you have learned on both campuses. We have high hopes for you.

As I have told many of you, we will plan a class reunion when I turn 80, which will be only ten years from now. When that time comes, you will prove to me that you have embraced the best from the two educational systems and that you have put your knowledge to work. You also will share with me what you have done for your community and how you have transformed your neighborhood into a better place to live. You will show me what you accomplished in those ten years.

I am longing for that day to come. I am simply so pleased to be part of your higher education journey. I am proud of you. Best wishes and warm congratulations to you all.

Thank you.