

Eric Zhang

Financial Economics Certificate

Class of 2013 – Graduation Speech

Speech – FE certificate ceremony 2013

Good afternoon, professors, friends, and families. Thank you, professor Lariviere for your amazing speech. It's hard to believe that we are graduating from the Kellogg undergraduate program and from Northwestern already. I feel like yesterday, I was still the sophomore prospective student asking all the questions about this program. The question I asked the most was "what's the best part of the program?" I can't remember the answers people gave me two years ago, but today, as a graduating senior, I think I should take some time to seek the answer of this question by myself.

This is not an easy question. I mean, where should I even get started? We get to take Kellogg classes and usually do better than the MBA students. We have our own career service and student activities fund. We have nice study rooms, color printing, and free coffee. And our professor in the Investments class is probably the best dressed in the entire America.

The list can go on and on, but when I think about what I enjoyed the most in the program and what helped me achieve what I couldn't have achieved otherwise, the answer to my question becomes clearer. The best part of our program is its people. I know, I know, this is a very vague answer, and you have probably heard it a hundred times during the recruiting season – they ask us “why do you want to work for this bank or that consulting firm,” and we say “it’s the people... It’s always the people.” But please let me explain why I think people is the best part of our program, and I think you would agree with me on this one.

To begin with, I don't think I'm exaggerating at all to say that students in our program are among the most talented on campus. For one thing, we all survived professor Todorov's final exam in the Derivatives class. Of course, we are talented not only in finance, but also in a variety of subjects. We have scientists, engineers, historians, filmmakers, and professional jazz players. We have student leaders of all kinds of organizations and clubs, and entrepreneurs who run the biggest student businesses on campus. And after our group outing last time, I also noticed that we have some rising stars in bowling. I am not surprised.

What's more important is that we are not just a group of talented people, but people who really work as a team and push each other forward. Teamwork in our program runs deeper than collaborating in class projects. It's a team of students willing to stay up till 3am every day for half a month to compete in a case

competition. It's students in recruiting season giving mock interviews to each other and sharing the best interview guides. It's the feeling that other people's success is my own success, and the responsibility that I as an individual must work hard and contribute to the success of the team.

Finally, we have the best people running the program who are always looking out for us. Rachel makes sure that we are aware of and prepared for the career opportunities. Janelle makes everything run smoothly in the program and keeps us in the loop with the Award-Winning newsletters. Carol always sees to the success of every student, and she always goes out of her way to help international students like me get the paperwork done for our internships. I would like to express my gratitude to all our staff and professors. We wouldn't be standing here today without any one of you.

Even though we are graduating today, I think there is still something we can do in the future to carry on our tradition of having the best people. When I was interning last summer, I was surprised that the firm had networking receptions for schools like Duke and Michigan but not for Northwestern, because we didn't have enough interns at the firm. Now, we are going to be professionals in a variety of fields either this fall or in a couple of years. I know we will all be busy with our own work and achievements, but I still would like to urge all of us to reply to that email from a fellow wildcat, to hop on the phone for a quick chat, and to pass on

that outstanding resume to the recruiter. Let's keep working as a team, and let *us* be the best part of our program. Congratulations again to everyone. Thank you very much.