

Student Lasallian Commencement Address
December 2012
Presented by: Chelsie Peters

Good afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family, and friends.

I am honored to be standing here in front of you today, in front of such a diverse, passionate, intelligent, and caring group of individuals. From up here on stage, I can truly see how blessed we have been these past few years. Our families, friends, and the Lewis University team, all of you, have been with us since day one. There will be tears of joy, lots of laughs, and plenty of hugs given today but the most important thing we will receive is pride. Graduates, we should feel proud that we have completed this milestone, the milestone we have been working to achieve since a young age, the milestone of a college degree.

I do not believe that anyone will truly understand what it feels like to be part of this university, to be a graduate of Lewis, until they have sat where we are sitting in this room, in this cap and gown. For the past four years, we have grown together as part of a community where we were treated as equals, given opportunities to grow, and challenged to embrace the future.

The community that the Christian Brothers, and faculty, and staff have made for us is beyond inviting. Through the mission value of Association they have created a community, a home for us based around our education. I don't know if there is any other college out there that cares as much about creating a community as we do here at Lewis. We have never felt alone here; there is always someone there to pick you up. The University has an open door policy. You can go to any department and find someone who is willing to listen to your story and give you advice. So let us take the value of Association wherever we may go and share this sense of community.

We have all been asked, what is next for you? What are you going to do now? Some of us may have an answer; some of us may not, but that is the beauty of it. The possibilities for us now are endless. We have been given the gift of knowledge and wisdom. Lewis University has helped us achieve so much. As we continue the journey, working on our resumes, job applications, and even consider furthering our education in grad school, we will always have our Lewis University experience as our foundation. If you should ever find yourself in difficult circumstances, know that this foundation is the starting point for rebuilding.

We have all come to Lewis University with a different story and on a different path. Saint John Baptist de La Salle said that there are small imperceptible steps that lead you to where you're going. You may not have realized it, but there were certain decisions you made to bring you here to this room today. Was it a friend who told you about Lewis University? A parent who snuck the application into the conversation one night? Or was it Lewis that found you? De La Salle believed that God guided him on his life's journey. How did God accompany you on your college journey?

No one ever said the journey would be easy. When you look back on your college experience, we all had that one semester that really challenged us. It was that semester that made you question yourself, your major, your goals, and your dreams. For me, that was my first semester here at Lewis. I had no idea how hard it was to move away from the only place and people I have known my entire life. I struggled with school, relationships, soccer, residence hall living, and being comfortable in my own skin. And when I reflect on that semester and think, wow! How did I get through that? I remember that I had a team of people behind me that was not going to let me fail.

So who was your team? Was it the professor that helped you find a place to live or a job when you needed one; the friend that drove around with you for hours, listening to music and talking about life, or was it a parent who visited you countless times just to make sure you were okay? Whoever it was that contributed to your success, thank them, tell them how much you appreciate them and value that relationship.

It is now our time to continue the journey beyond Lewis. We have been given the tools for a successful life. We have gained a sense of wisdom and knowledge from our professors, as well as Lasallian values. It is now our duty to take these tools and give them back to the world. So let us all take deep breath because we are about to celebrate what we have all worked so hard for – and we are doing it with the community that supported us along the way. As we continue our journey, let us travel in the Lasallian way and trust that God will provide and lead the way. Congratulations class of 2012, and to quote from *The Hunger Games*, “may the odds be ever in your favor.”