

Good morning. It is my absolute honor and pleasure to welcome you to the 2011 Colegio Jefferson graduation and to be among the first to formally recognize and congratulate an outstanding group of 45 students who individually and collectively have distinguished themselves as scholars, athletes, and well rounded citizens of the world.

This class is both unique and special. They are unique in their accomplishments as a class and in their individual academic and extracurricular activities. They have met high standards that future classes will look to surpass and it will not be easy to beat.

The list of colleges and universities to which these students have received admission stretches from Venezuela to the United States up to Canada and Europe. The list is extremely long and I am afraid if I mentioned all the universities to which they were all accepted to, we would be here far longer than we would want to. I will However, Mention the schools to which our students will be attending this coming fall. They are: Alexander Dow Boston College, Carlos Benzecri Univ. Of Toronto Jorge Finol, Virginia Tech., Jose I. Malave Florida Tech., Silvana Villamizar University of South Florida, Vanessa Matalon University of California, Berkeley, Laura Cappellin Georgetown Univ., Martin Arnal University of California at San Diego, Bernardo Borges University of Colorado at Boulder, Maximilian Wejc University of Colorado at Boulder, Gabriela Aneas Pratt Institute, Diego Rivas Northeastern University, Andres Sultan Univ. of Tampa, Juan Jose Platas Univ. of Tampa, Maria Ignacia Curiel New York University, Sylvia Von Fedak Mount Ida College, Nicolle Hazard Pratt Institute, Maria V. Marin Jacobs University, Juan A. Kochen University of Miami, Diego Herrera University of Colorado at Boulder, Diego Benitez Univ. of Toronto, Carlos Fernandez Florida Institute of Technology, Lord E. Johnson University of Tampa

WE are very proud of these achievements!

Graduates, graduation is, above all, a time for decision-making. Now your decisions may not change the world order but they may change your world. Today, like a builder, you are laying a foundation for your future. Each one of you will build a different life. Some of you have great dreams, lofty ambitions. Yet more of you will be content with a simpler lifestyle. Today I urge each one of you to reach out for your own personal best.

That best is as varied as you are of course. For some, it may simply mean having a nine to five job and spending lots of time with your families. For others, it may mean travelling the world and rarely seeing your families. For some it will mean making headline news, for others staying out of the limelight. Whatever you choose to do, though, do it well.

Try to find the pleasures in everyday life. No matter how sad or sorrowful we may be every day does have something good. If you feel miserable and ill it could be the kindness of a nurse. If you are lonely it could be a quick call from a friend. Every day has a beautiful sunrise, a glorious sunset. When the world of men fails you look at the wonders of nature.

Just now you will be deciding whether you want to be an entrepreneur or a scientist, an engineer or a doctor. You are living in a world full of choices and I urge you to open your mind to those choices. If you are not certain what you want to do in life be flexible. Consider all the options that are available to you. Choose what will make you happy because your career should be more than just a job. It should be a joy.

All of us make mistakes in our lives. When you do, admit it, make the necessary changes to improve things. Whatever you do, though, do not make the mistake of losing your friends. They are

a treasure you should keep for life. Most of you by now know that your own family members are your best friends. Remember when you thought your parents didn't know a lot? Watch how incredibly smart they become over the next decade. For the most part this intellectual leap will not be from attending academic classes; it turns out that parents are pretty skilled at picking up on real life lessons. Continue to talk and listen to your parents. Value their opinions. They learned from their mistakes and will save you much stress and anxiety. They deserve your appreciation.

Today you are saying goodbye to many school rules, to a lot of discipline. From now on it will be up to you to discipline yourself. That will prove how adult you are. Self-discipline means, of course, doing things in moderation for the good of your overall health. So don't eat or drink too much. Don't do exercises until you fall down dead. Don't study until you have a nervous breakdown. I imagine I am speaking to the converted on that one!

Try to do an act of kindness every day. It will make you, and others, feel good. Whatever your religious beliefs, or lack of them, respect those of others. The world would be a poorer place without faith. Finally and most importantly, be proud of your country and make your country and us, proud of you.

I wish for each and every one of you: Good fortune; Fulfilled dreams; Great success; and amazing happiness.

But, most of all I wish you the discipline, the courage and the perseverance to make your dreams come true.

May God Bless all of you!

