

Tahnika Rodriguez's Address at EMBA 2008 Hooding Ceremony

Chancellor, Deans, Professors, Staff, Parents, Spouses, loved ones, friends, and honored guest - it is my honor to speak on behalf of the 2008 Executive Master's of Business Administration graduating class.

My fellow graduates, when we started this program we knew we were embarking on a journey to broaden our horizons and we knew we would be meeting new people along the way. Now that we have completed this program many will ask us what we thought about the UTC EMBA program.

Before we answer I challenge us to the following questions - how different are we today than when we started? Are we more educated? Are we more cultured, a little more computer savvy? Are we more humbled, more experienced? Are we better leaders? Are we different? The answer is yes.

As I look back on this program I am amazed at how much we have grown and matured in our learning, our outlook, and our perception of our potential in the vast global world that we live in.

Even more amazing is how what we have learned will impact us for decades. In addition to the educational impact lies the personal impact the professors and our cohort had on our lives. This impact, graduates, will last forever. *And I have a pretty good feeling our impact on our professors will last for quite a while as well.*

Years from now we will be talking about how we really learned what culture meant... especially when we think of our first restaurant experience during our first night in Prague.

Years from now we will be thinking about how what we do in America affects what happens in the world... and how the world is affecting Chattanooga.

Perhaps years from now we will be weighing our options for potential entrepreneurial opportunities.





Years from now when we hear someone whistle to get our attention we will think about the summer of 2008 and oh how can we forget after learning about future value that we would need to work until we are 95 to retire wealthy...

There are other memories that can be summed up in one or two words... such as Access Database, Stats, Triangular what? & WSJ who?

But the sweetest memories will come when years from now we think about Armando, Brian, David, Jason, Libby, Robert, Tahnika, Todd, and Troy and smiles come across our faces. We will be able to think of the impact we had on their lives as well as the impact they have had on ours.

Reflect on this quote regarding excellence:

Excellence is...

-  ...the result of caring more than others think is wise,
-  ...risking more than others think is safe,
-  ...dreaming more than others think is practical, and
-  ...expecting more than others think is possible.

For all of us here today, remember excellence in everything you do. Realize that there is no tomorrow - for tomorrow is today. We started this program 16 months ago.

And in 16 months, we have sold houses, sold and acquired businesses, had babies, started new jobs, picked up new hobbies, all while maintaining careers and time with our loved ones. We fulfilled a dream and still maintained excellence in our daily lives.

Each of us has dreams, many dreams in fact. Reach beyond your inhibitions and accomplish those dreams... and in everything we do, strive for excellence.

In closing, as we sat at the Meeting Place the night after our final class we discussed the memories; but underneath that discussion was the answer to the question I asked earlier, "What do you think of the UTC EMBA program?"

UTC, we think the world of it – and this graduating class of 2008 thanks you for the education, the experience and the memories.

I will miss each and every one of you and I appreciate and am deeply honored for this opportunity to speak on your behalf. Thank you and God bless.