

# VCU School of Business

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Good evening, distinguished gentlemen, esteemed gentlewomen, and my amazing peers. I have to admit, I'm a bit nervous; I guess this doesn't bode well for me, as one day I would like to have a career in politics.

I've been asked to speak briefly today about what it means to be a VCU student and what receiving a scholarship truly means. Fortunately, for you they only gave me five minutes to speak about this or we could have been here all night as I tend to be rather long-winded and verbose, which again makes a lot of sense since one day I want to be a politician. Hopefully, you won't hold that against me.

As cliché as it sounds, the VCU experience has truly transformed my life. I was a brash, overconfident, hotshot high school student with a near perfect SAT score and GPA, who had never had to try a day in his life. I was one of those kids most students envy, the kid who would just saunter into class having barely studied and break the curve. For some reason, at that time I thought that made me something special and that great grades and test scores really meant something. I couldn't have been more wrong.

I had a laundry list of schools I had gotten into around the country including some Ivy League universities, which only added to my pride. I wound up choosing to enroll at the University of Virginia simply because it was the highest ranked university that my parents agreed to pay for and in the process I turned down a full scholarship to VCU.

I have never made a bigger mistake in my life. Don't get me wrong, UVA is an amazing school, but it wasn't the right school for me. However, I did wind up getting it right on my second try and transferred to VCU after my first year at UVA. My VCU experience has molded me into a much better person than I was before - from that brash kid, who thought the world owed him something to a down-to-earth, hard-working, humble man, who understands life through a much wider perspective.

How did VCU change me so much? I must say the education I received outside of the classroom at VCU is what has truly made all the difference. The diversity of VCU is simply spectacular. I dare say there is not another university in the country in which you can meet students from such disparate walks of life: from first generation students to fifth

generation students, from students from Australia, Nigeria, and China to students from New York and California. Such diversity presents learning experiences that simply cannot be matched.

I was able to meet and really learn from an amazingly wide assortment of both students and professors. This direct experience with so many different people really opened my eyes. I had never realized how many people work fulltime with young children and still are able put themselves through college or how many individuals come back later in life to complete a degree. What also really struck me, was how many students at VCU were the first individual in their families to go to college.

My time at VCU has shattered many of my unrealistic beliefs about the world that were inculcated from my upper-middle class upbringing. There are simply so many people who do not have things that I used to take for granted. There were just so many things I used to care about that are so trivial. It was really inspirational and motivating to see how much others valued education and how hard they worked to better themselves. It was the kick in the butt that I needed. So many other individuals were making so much of the so little that they had and here I was wasting and squandering away so many blessings.

My wish has always been to devote my life to helping others, but there is no way that I could have ever hoped to achieve that dream being the person I was before VCU. I am now able to vividly and clearly imagine and feel experiences from the vantage point of other people. The VCU experience has stoked my passion for helping others to garner what I have been blessed to have.

Therefore, if I had to say one thing that makes VCU special, I would have to say that it's you, you, you, it's all of you who have helped to make VCU the wondrous place that it is. From the students, to the faculty, to the community that supports our wonderful school, we have the best and most diverse academic community in the country!!!

So that has been my VCU experience and what I feel is most special about VCU. But let's not forget, why I have the opportunity to speak in front of all of you wonderful people today, it's the fact that members of the community are so generous and supportive of our wonderful school.

I just want to speak briefly on behalf of all the students who have received a scholarship. To let all of our wonderful donors know that the scholarships we have received mean so much more than simply the money we have received. Although, the money itself has

allowed many of us to graduate on time, to be able to finish college at all, and to pursue interests that we could not have pursued without financial assistance, the money we have received is not the truth worth of a scholarship.

The true worth of receiving a scholarship is a testament of the others' belief in our potential. I passionately believe that for individuals to go on to do great things, they must have the faith of others. This faith comforts, nurtures, and motivates individuals during their darkest and most trying hours. Your confidence in the future of and your support of the students at Virginia Commonwealth University is truly empowering and the true value of these scholarships.

Your kind confidence shall serve many of us well in the future as we hope to dedicate our lives to building a better and brighter future for all. Personally, my hopes, dreams, and aspirations of serving the greater good are inexplicably tied to attending law school to become a public interest lawyer. I wish to serve the interests of the downtrodden and poor. I wish to be the voice for those who have lost it due to cruel and unforeseen circumstances of life. Then I hope to go into politics in my youth – to be a fresh face with unswerving ideals, to help ferment societal change, and to help make people really believe that the world can truly be changed and that they are capable of changing it. And I know many of my peers, sitting in this room, have similar aspirations.

We know such idealistic words are easy to say, but insanely difficult to accomplish. We know that we will have to endure tremendous hardships and setbacks even to garner a glimmer of what we hope for. It is during these times that your kind testament along with those of others shall give us strength to rekindle our embattled spirits. Every single person who has gone on to change the world (Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Einstein, Mother Teresa, etc.) has started somewhere. They have all come from humble beginnings. They all have something in common – they have all been laughed at and called foolish dreamers, but in spite of that they persevered and at some point in their lives they convinced people to take a chance on them and to believe in them. They convinced people to have the audacity to have great hopes for them. From the bottom of my heart I want to thank all of you for having the audacity to believe in us, which has given all of us a start.

On a concluding and very serious note. God bless you all! God bless America! Make sure you guys vote for me in 2032!!! I will also be available after the dinner to shake hands and to kiss babies!