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Commencement Address

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Thank you, Dr. Mason, for the kind introduction and the invitation to speak.

I will let you in on a secret. I was a little nervous about today. You see, over the past year I have been conditioned to interact with people using technologies like Zoom and with a computer screen as a barrier. I must admit, during these Zoom meetings there have been times when no one could hear me. The other night, I had a nightmare that I would be on this stage at the Giant Center, giving my speech and again no one could hear me. Then the following five words woke me up. "Brian, you are on mute". This is an example of one of the many challenges we have all experienced this year. I am happy that we confirmed my mute button is off. I would like to talk about a precious resource - 'TicToc'. Let me clarify, the precious resource is not the social media app, but rather time.

Over the past year, the balance of social human interaction with technology has been a challenge. I applaud everyone's resilience and ability to adapt and embrace change. I know you have all been asked to switch from in-person, to mixed-mode, remote synchronous and asynchronous learning. Technology is an amazing tool, but if you are not present, listening, interacting and being mindful in the moment, you are squandering a precious resource – time.

During my graduate studies at Penn State Harrisburg, I received permission to take an on-line class with World Campus. At the time, I was balancing a lot of pressures at work and at home with a young family. My plan was to logon during the weekends on my own time to catch up on the course work. I learned a quick lesson. I failed the first assignment. Why? Because I wasn't interacting with my classmates. My professor's expectation was that each day, everyone would actively participate in discussion. By not being present in the learning process, I effectively put myself on mute. I wasn't interacting, collaborating and

learning with the rest of the class. The class was my team and I needed to be a teammate by being mindful of everyone's time, sharing, and contributing to the discussion of the day.

During these uncertain times, we all had to rebalance our lives between school, jobs, and family. Let's be honest it hasn't been easy. We thought we could optimize our time by multitasking. Our attention was elsewhere and we were not focused in the moment. Or maybe our mute buttons were on and our contributions were silenced from the discussion. These examples demonstrate the value of being present, being mindful in the moment and the power of speaking up and trusting others to do the same.

I have reflected on this past year, personally and professionally. I realized I have had to look at life and work differently. Personally, I realize how precious time can be with loved ones and to not take life for granted. Professionally, I believe teamwork, culture, and collaboration can support us through uncertain times and enable us to

be resourceful in overcoming any obstacles. We have and we will continue to evolve and adapt, but we can only do that if we are mindful and present in time.

Take a moment and reflect on the good and the challenges of the past year. We are not perfect, but understanding that is an important step to move forward and to learn and grow. Celebrate your successes and recognize areas of change and improvement. You will continue to adapt, change and evolve as an individual and hopefully as part of a team in the future. Anything is possible with time.

Understand your passion, to find your purpose. Trust yourself and your abilities. Use your education and never stop learning. Communicate by listening. Work as a team. You may even find a career in technology with a healthcare organization. Where you start your career, and where you end up might change. Time will tell.

Members of the faculty, staff, my fellow alumni, families and friends thank you for being present today to celebrate the success of our loved

ones. Graduates, WE ARE Penn State and WE ARE here today to recognize and reward you for your accomplishments and to challenge you to continue to create change and drive improvement.

'TicToc', my time is up, but it is your time to be present. Your mute button is now off. Trust yourself and your abilities. Be authentic and genuine to yourself and your values. Never stop giving gratitude to the people that challenge you and that love you. I am proud of you, keep living your values each and every day. Thank you for your time and letting me share this special day with you.