

**Lasell College**  
**2013 Commencement Speech**  
**Lucie Salhany**

Thank you, President Alexander, for your friendship, your support and your always sage advice.

Good morning Chairman Blankstein, Vice President Ostrow, Reverend Sullivan, Ms. Anthony, Trustees, Overseers, faculty, students, distinguished guests, parents, families, friends and graduates of the class of 2013.

When President Alexander asked me to be this year's commencement speaker, I said that I was at a loss for words. And he replied that he was counting on that. I asked why he had chosen me and he replied, "someone said commencement speeches were invented so that graduates would never be released into the world until they had been properly sedated."

I hope he was kidding... but I agreed, because I love this school, because my son received a great education here, and because I thought I had something to share with you to help you in the workplace. Things they didn't teach you in school. By the way, I don't want to put you to sleep, BUT if you begin to feel drowsy, please think of your student loans. That'll keep you awake!

There are more than 7,000 institutions of higher education in the United States. At 90% of them, speakers are telling graduates that today is the beginning of another step in THEIR lives. That is true enough. But the journey has not been theirs or yours alone. Your parents or guardians and other family members have been fellow travelers.

I'm sure most of you don't remember that day when a parent or guardian walked you into your first day of school. I remember the walk of tears, first with my oldest son, then four years later with my youngest. Both times, I hoped that they would cling to my hand crying, "No, no Mommy, I want to stay with you."

But sadly they just looked forward and went right into their classroom. I'M THE ONE WHO CRIED, AND HAD TO BE COMFORTED WITH A SOOTHING PAT ON MY BACK FROM THE PRINCIPAL, UTTERING, "DON'T WORRY YOU'LL BE OKAY." I DIDN'T WALK INTO THAT CLASSROOM OR ANY OTHER...BUT I WAS THERE BY PROXY FOR 17 YEARS.

And let me also talk about some of the efforts it took to support your educational growth.

1. Someone in your family packed 2,160 peanut butter and jelly, bologna or tuna sandwiches.
2. They have corrected over 300 book reports. In my case, when my son didn't finish his summer reading we were forced to read him his books out loud over Labor Day weekend and stood over him until he wrote his reports. He was grounded more times than Lindsay Lohan was sent to jail.

3. They asked, “Did you finish your homework yet?” over 5,000 times. They ordered, “no texting until math is done,” and demanded that Facebook be turned off until that World History paper is completed, 250 times.

They have slept countless times with one eye shut and one eye on the clock, waiting for the door to open and know you were safe at home. And they have made sacrifices to pay for new school clothes, uniforms, shoes, paid all or some of your tuition. AH, GRADUATION: PRICELESS.

Let me be the first to say, you have all done it! So please, everyone, let’s STAND AND APPLAUD all of you: the parents and guardians. I know how hard it was, and you deserve our recognition.

And now for the Graduates: congratulations to you!

I bet there were times when you thought today would never come. But you did it, and your journey continues. Your next stop: a job. I’m here to tell you that the road will not be smooth, just because you have a diploma. Even with it, you will most assuredly trip and you are likely to trip more than once. But you have a great education which will cushion that fall and through experience you will learn to pick yourself up.

I started work as a secretary. The very first job I had was as a typist in an insurance company. I typed insurance policies 8 hours a day. After the first 2.5 hours a bell rang and we could take a 15 minute coffee break. Then, I typed for another 1.5 hours until the lunch bell rang. Then, more typing, until the afternoon coffee bell rang. I had to leave after six months, because I hated the regimentation. But the good news is that I got some office experience and a great recommendation for my next job.

That job wasn’t much better. I took dictation and transcribed letters and reports for five men. One day, I asked to go through the storeroom to learn about the products they were talking about and selling. I was told that I did not need that information to just do my job. THAT TIME A BELL DID RING, ONLY IT WAS IN MY HEAD. IT SIGNALLED THE TIME HAD COME TO MOVE ON.

My next job was secretary to the program manager of a local television station. That was my “aha” moment. From the first week, I knew that I had found the career I wanted. It did not matter that I was a secretary. I just wanted the opportunity to work in the business. And at WKBF-TV in Cleveland, I learned it from the bottom up, and started a career that took me to the top of two networks and two TV studios.

Here are some things I learned during the last 40 plus years:

1. Do not be afraid to take a job in an entry level position. You want to get in, and you want to learn a company from the ground up. Come in early, work late, and work smart. Executives love to see junior staff show an interest in the company and exuberance for their jobs. Many times, when I was a CEO, I would get to the office early and find an assistant or junior level employee already there. Invariably we would end up having coffee together, and knowing each other paid off for both of us. The same thing is true for working at night. Don't rush off. Some of the most exciting opportunities to learn and grow come after most of your counterparts have already left the building. Always say "yes" to special projects, even when they require coming in on weekends for no pay. When I was a promotion coordinator at the station in Cleveland, we were asked to include some of our cartoon characters in a local parade. We had the costumes, but no budget to hire people to wear the costumes. So, the Program Manager, the Controller, the CFO and I donned these costumes, hopped on electric scooters and rode in the parade. I didn't get paid, but every executive in the entire company heard about the effort we made for the station.

2. Never tell your boss "I'm doing the best I can." That begs the answer, "maybe that's not good enough." What you should say is, "I'm working on it, but I need a little help. I have some questions you might be able to answer." Bosses love to give help and guidance.

3. Always be prepared for a meeting. If you don't know something, say you don't know, but will find out ASAP. Figure the problem out, research the answer, and make sure to follow-up. When I was Chairman of Fox Broadcasting we decided to go after the NFL. CBS and NBC controlled the broadcast rights that were coming up for renewal. They were established networks and we were just the upstart network. They had relationships with the owners and commissioners and we didn't. And worst of all, I was a woman who knew nothing about pro football, and I was heading up the negotiating team. So, I had to get a quick education about the leagues, the teams and some of the players.

On the way to a meeting with the broadcast committee, which included the owners of the Dallas Cowboys, Denver Broncos, and New England Patriots, I knew I would panic when it came time to talk to these guys about the leagues and the teams. So, I wrote the AFC teams on the palm of my left hand and the NFC teams on the palm of my right hand. I had to keep my hands unclenched so the ink wouldn't smudge. Every time they asked me something specific I looked down at my palm and sounded really smart. When it came time to decide if we wanted the AFC or the NFC, I wanted to say "we'll take anything." But I knew they were looking for some decision from us. So, I looked down at my palms, and since I was right-handed I said, "the NFC." As it turned out, the right call was the correct call. The NFC became very profitable for our stations which were mainly in the NFC markets. FORTUNATELY, UNLIKE SARAH PALIN, NO ONE SAW THE WRITING ON MY HANDS.

4. Never eat lunch alone. It's a good time to get to know your co-workers, learn about their jobs and assess the competition in a RELAXED SETTING.
5. Build or be a strong part of a team. Without a good strong team no one can be successful. When I started at UPN that became the CW Network, we were forced to start building the network from scratch and get it on the air in four months. We were able to do it only because we had a team that worked around the clock. We had a common mission, everyone was treated as an important individual and everyone had a ball.
6. Act like a winner at work. HAVE FUN, don't whine and don't complain. People who act like they are successful will be successful.
7. Keep your word: it is all you have. I worked for a man who always invoked the "so what" clause. "So what if you were promised a raise, you're not getting it, so quit." "So what if I signed this contract, sue me." "So what if your child is sick, you have to come in today or be fired." Everyone said that he was as good as his word. And today, he still is one of the most disrespected and hated men in Los Angeles. In 1957, when a huge crowd turned out for the funeral of Louis B. Mayer, the last M in MGM, a comedian quipped, "Give the people what they want, and they'll come out for it." I'm hoping Mr. "so what" commands the same attention.
8. Be compassionate and be fair. Don't sit around and tell gender, sexual preference, race or nationality jokes. At Paramount, I hired a brilliant attorney from New York, who had worked for Rudy Giuliani. He said he wanted to live in a warm climate and learn about show business. Soon after, in a meeting, one of the salespeople cracked a joke about gays. I said that I would fire anyone in our division, who told a joke like that again. Years later after I was at Fox, that attorney called to tell me he was dying from AIDS, and that he wanted to thank me for sticking up for him that day and for outlawing those kinds of jokes. The weird part of the story is that I didn't know until that moment that he was gay, but I do remember how smart he was and how well he did his job.
9. Learn about the company. Don't flaunt the knowledge; use it to your advantage. For example, if the stock price is down, if revenue is dropping, if the economy is shifting, be aware and be prepared to use this knowledge to help you. I was at dinner with the Chairman of the Board of Paramount Pictures and I asked him why he thought our stock was up. He answered "Because of the people in this room." He stood up and gave a toast to all the employees. He thanked me for reminding him. Knowledge is power. And used the right way, brown-nosing doesn't hurt either. Just don't overdo it.
10. Save part of your paycheck, even if it's only \$20.00 a week – you'll be surprised how that number will add up over the years. Always participate in the company's benefit and 401K plan. It is a forced saving, and again, you have to think of your future because you're going to live longer

and be healthier than any previous generation, and you'll need lots of money so you can retire and someday give commencement speeches and donate to our next capital drive.

11. Network – join organizations in your field, meet as many people as you can, drain them of their knowledge and listen to their stories, after all you never know where your next job will be and who can help you.

12. In a commencement speech, Hilary Clinton said that hair does count...well I'm here to tell you that hair and dress count. Always look good (even after only after a few hours sleep), make sure your clothes are clean and pressed (you never know who's going to invite you out to lunch).

13. Pick a spouse, partner or life mate who supports you and is willing to sacrifice for your goals, as you are for theirs. My husband, John Polcari spent 14 years commuting weekly from Boston to California so I could live my dream; and I couldn't and wouldn't have done it without him.

14. And last but not least, don't let the bastards get you down. When I was a kid and came home crying because someone taunted me, ignored me, or yelled at me, my mom would tell me to "throw my shoulders back, stand tall and look them in the eye, because no one is better than you!"

Walk tall class of 2013. Congratulations again, and best of luck.