

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine

Class of 2020 Commencement

First let me say congratulations on your achievement. This has been a monumental task for each one of you. Enjoy the moment. Pat yourself on the back and look back at what you have accomplished. Savor the moment. You earned every bit of this accomplishment.

Having said all of that, spend a little more time thinking about the past for a moment. What you have accomplished is because of who you were yesterday. Everything you accomplished or have done to date is because you were doing one of two things: helping others or learning from others. In other words, "You have made a difference in your life and those you have been in contact with." Think about what that means for a minute. Do not take that lightly. Individuals in leadership roles get there because they make things happen, not watch them happen.

There is a good chance some of you may have interviewed with me in your process of being accepted to Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. In other words, we both learned something from one another. Let me put it another way. Everything you have done has made an impact on who you are today and who you become tomorrow. In my professional background of manufacturing, I came in contact with thousands of people in all walks of life for over 40 years. There were many times I did a lot more listening than talking. Listening before talking gave me the ability to be heard when I started to speak.

People will always be the key. It is about who you have in your life, not what you have in your life. We are human and not perfect, but in your profession, you are expected to be right all the time. Leadership always comes at a cost and sooner or later you will wish you had handled a situation differently than you did. Everyone responds in his or her own way. It is what you do next that will become important. Your livelihood and those you serve are counting on you being the best at whatever you decide to do. Remember: "For a Caterpillar to become a Butterfly it must change."

Many years ago a friend gave me a card titled "Advice from a Lake." Take a moment to think about the lake's advice and what it means for all your tomorrows: Be clear, make positive ripples, look beneath the surface, stay calm, shore up friends, take time to reflect, be full of life.

Respectfully,
Jerry Barnes