MBA Graduation Banquet Toast  
University of Oregon  
June 6, 2013  

Prof. Andrew J. Nelson

Let me begin by thanking you for the incredible honor of the elective teaching award. It means a great deal to me. Of course, I now feel that if I had anything intelligent or witty to say for this toast, which is doubtful, I should now save it for my graduation address.

So instead, I’ll tell you a quick story: Last week, I was having a beer with a former undergraduate student. (To those members of the administration who just winced, yes, he’s over 21.) Anyway, he wanted to know about MBA programs and he had his list of questions: the admissions process, core classes, electives, grading, internships, and job possibilities. It was a beautiful day and we were sitting outside, so we spent about half an hour discussing them. But, as I then told him, although these questions are important, they hardly capture the meaning and the value of an MBA program.

20 years from now, you won’t remember whether you got an A- or a B+ in that class. You won’t remember that painful final exam. Much as it pains me, you may not even remember the “diamond” model from Recognizing Business Opportunities. But you will remember tonight. (Well, at least those of you don’t pass out on the bus home will.) You will remember the spontaneous conversations in the MBA lounge. You will remember the afternoons that melted into evenings on the patio at Rennies. And you will remember each other.

For now that you’re nearly done with all of the formal requirements for what is a most impressive degree, the secret is that it was never about the degree; it was about the relationships. I know that I, for one, will always be thankful that our paths crossed. And I encourage you to look around this room – look to your right and to your left – and raise your glass to your fellow graduates. For you are the Oregon MBA. Congratulations.