

**Remarks of Lt. Governor Timothy P. Murray  
Worcester State College Commencement  
DCU Center, Worcester  
May 18, 2008**

President Ashely; Chairman Tetler; President Shartin; trustees; distinguished faculty; honored guests and members of the Class of 2008. Thank you for the invitation to be a part of this wonderful ceremony.

This is your day—we're here to celebrate your achievements. But I do want to take just a minute to tell you how humbling it is for me to speak here today.

My father's generation was the first in his family to have the opportunity to go to college. And for my Dad, that college was Worcester State.

He went on to teach high school history for 37 years, and has been a tremendous role model, not just for me and my family, but for the hundreds of students that he taught and counseled over the course of his career.

I grew up just down the street from Worcester State—I played little league at Jesse Burkett, which as you know is right next to the campus. The images of the campus, of the tall white columns on the administration building, the beautiful views from Chandler Street—that is what college looked like for me as a boy growing up in this city.

When we drove by the school, or when my friends and I rode our bikes down to the ball fields, I had the sense that something very important was going on there. As I got older, and understood more specifically how transformative education could be, and how people worked so very hard for an opportunity to attend college, that sense of importance grew even stronger.

And because the mission of Worcester State College was for many years focused almost solely on training teachers, like so many generations of children who attended the Worcester public schools, I was taught, inspired, and yes, disciplined on occasion, by excellent teachers who graduated from Worcester State.

This college has always been a part of my life, just as it has been a vital part of this city. So to celebrate this commencement with you today is an honor I will never forget and I thank you for it.

But first and foremost—this is your day. You have worked so hard, and done so well, you are deserving of our praise and respect.

I am also mindful that the academic achievements we honor today reflect not only your individual efforts, but extend to the efforts of all the people in your lives who encouraged and supported you along the way. Your parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers. Everyone who has helped you get to this day deserves recognition for a job well-done.

I also want to take a moment, to offer my personal thanks and best wishes to those in the Class of 2008 who will soon be commissioned into the armed forces of the United States.

We are a free people, who depend upon citizen-soldiers to protect our way of life. We are honored by your commitment and we are thankful for your service. God speed.

The Class of 2008 has come to this moment from many different backgrounds, and different stages of life. Some of you stepped onto the campus of Worcester State College fresh out of high school, ready to hit the books after summer vacation. Others came later in life, with spouses and families to attend to and care for, even as they pursued their education. Collectively, you brought a wide range of life experiences to this class, and I hope that has helped you to learn from each other, to broaden your perspectives, and

perhaps to challenge your assumptions about people— because that’s what public education is all about.

The once-radical idea of making education available to all, regardless of social or economic status, was born here in Massachusetts, and the whole country is the better for it. Public education is the great equalizer. It not only enables the American Dream, it sustains it. For our democracy to survive, citizens must be informed and educated, so they can exercise their judgment at the ballot box, or on the floor of town meetings, or when advocating for change through civic engagement.

As Horace Mann said “Education is our only political safety.” Thomas Jefferson put it this way “Enlighten the people, and tyranny and oppression will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.”

Public education in our Commonwealth fulfills that ideal. Our public colleges and universities are world class. They push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation. They soar in the arts and humanities. They challenge students to excel in body and mind.

Furthermore, these institutions are essential to our future economic and community well-being. If we are to remain competitive and prosperous in this challenging global economy, then our public colleges and universities must play a critical role.

In Massachusetts, we have the intellectual capital and talented workforce to lead the world in many industries, and many markets. To sustain that ability for future generations, however, will take all of our best efforts. That means we must give every student the opportunity for a world-class education.

That’s why the Patrick/Murray administration is committed to investing in and improving our public education system at all levels. And as you go out into the working world, I encourage you to continue to support this system, which has nurtured your own achievements so well.

Beyond the economics, institutions like Worcester State College bolster the quality of life in the communities around them through the volunteerism of their students, faculty and staff. When I was mayor, I saw first-hand how Worcester State College students gave so much of themselves, throughout the community, but especially in the public schools.

Volunteerism, or civic engagement, has its own rewards, both for the person giving of their time and for those who benefit from the effort. Frankly, it can be among the most rewarding experiences in life.

That's why the governor and talk a lot about civic engagement. We try to shine a light on the good works people do, because that inspires others to follow their lead, and when that happens, we build a more connected, compassionate and vibrant community.

So I was pleased to see Worcester State has earned some national recognition, being named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for exemplary service efforts and service to disadvantaged youth.

This year, the Worcester State community contributed more than 2,500 hours of service with over 180 students participating in various organizations both in Worcester and the region. In the public schools, and at places like Abby's house, Friendly house, Worcester County Food bank, and many others, Worcester State students are doing great things and helping to make this a stronger and more compassionate community.

To those who have volunteered, I congratulate you . And for those who have yet to participate, I have some good news—it's not too late. Wherever you are headed after this ceremony, whether it's off to work, or to graduate school, or perhaps both, there will always be an opportunity for public or community service, and I urge you to seize it.

Take a look around you. Not everyone you see is your best friend, but they are your class mates, your neighbors and fellow citizens of this Commonwealth.

We are all connected, and when we work together for the greater common good, our Commonwealth thrives. So as you go forth from here today, I say pursue your passion. Pursue success. Work hard. Study hard. But always remember, to stay involved with the people and the community around you.

Offer help when needed. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. And get involved in your community.

Whether it is volunteering in local government, civic organizations, helping coach little league, or just being a good example to the youngsters in your neighborhood, the way you live your life will make a difference, and I urge you to continue the community service that is the hallmark of Worcester State College.

This commencement is a moment of great pride, infused with the energy and the accomplishments that each of you brings to this day. It is also a moment of reflection, to contemplate the challenges that are ahead of you.

Today, one chapter ends and we rush to turn the page and read on, to see how the story of the rest of your lives will play out. It will be an epic tale, with high points and low. But if you hold on to that drive, to that commitment to hard work and service that brought you to the success you achieve today, then I know you will match the challenges ahead, and that together our Commonwealth will prosper from your efforts.

Thank you again, and congratulations

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