

DR. RAMSEY:

Good afternoon. This is a day of great joy and celebration.

First thing I would like to do is thank Mr. Minnifield. Frank, thank you for your leadership as Chair of our Board of Trustees. Please join me in thanking him for his outstanding leadership to the University of Louisville.

(PAUSE)

April 10, just about a month ago, a community celebration was held, here, at the Yum! Center to honor our 2013 women's

basketball team – runner up in the national championship; and to also honor our 2013 men's basketball team – the national champions.

I began that community celebration by asking a question: “Is it a great time to be a Cardinal?” The answer from the 20,000 assembled that day was a loud and resounding, “Yes!”

So let me ask you: Is it a great time to be a Cardinal?

This has been a very special time in the life of our university. We are proud of these teams, the Sugar Bowl champion football team, Joao (Zsō-ow) De Lucca (De-Luke-uh) the NCAA 200 meter free style champion, and our many other athletic successes.

But let's remember that while athletics is important, our athletic budget is only 8% of the university's total budget and the University of Louisville is much more than a great athletic program.

For a number of years ago, the University of Louisville was given a public mandate by the

people of Kentucky – a mandate to increase economic opportunity and the quality of life for the people of our community and state.

We as an institution were challenged to be among the very best higher education institutions in the country.

And we are doing just that!

We are, as we say, on an amazing upward trajectory academically, as well as athletically.

Since the enactment of the Postsecondary Education Reform Act of 1997 the quality of

students attending the University of Louisville has dramatically increased. When you began at UofL you were the best academically prepared Freshman Class in the history of the University of Louisville, and since that time we have continued to see improvement in our freshman classes.

- While you have been at UofL we have lead Kentucky in the percentage increase in our 6-year graduation rate;**
- While you have been a Cardinal, we have lead Kentucky in the increase in the number of doctoral research degrees awarded; and we have lead Kentucky in**

**the percentage increase in doctoral
STEM degrees awarded;**

- **During your time at the University of
Louisville, we have lead Kentucky with
the number of students scoring in the
top 15% nationally on the Praxis II
exam;**
- **While you have been enrolled at the
University of Louisville the Chronicle of
Higher Education listed UofL as being
the 4th fastest research growing
institution in the nation;**

- **During your time at UofL we have had more students win prestigious Fulbright Scholarships than all other Kentucky institutions combined.**

And over the past four years our campus has been engaged daily in the life of our community, particularly Louisville's West End, improving health care and educational opportunities for the people of that area, thus helping us an institution achieve the prestigious status as a Carnegie Institution for Community Engagement.

Pause

Yes, we're on the right trajectory! In your years at the University of Louisville you have been part of something very special. And you should be proud of that.

We know, we know, that the great things that have happened at the University of Louisville have happened because of you. First, because you believed in the University of Louisville and you chose to come to UofL when there were many other schools you could have chosen.

Second, you, along with our outstanding faculty, staff, friends, alums, and donors have

worked hard in the most difficult of fiscal environments to achieve these amazing results in this amazing trajectory.

So we gather today to celebrate, for today is the most cherished event in the life of the academy – today is Commencement.

We gather to congratulate you – the Class of 2013 – for your personal achievement, for you, the Class of 2013, have built upon the great history, the great tradition that is the University of Louisville.

When you began your studies you made a commitment – a commitment of time, a

commitment of money, a commitment of effort. Congratulations for being true to your commitment.

And we know it hasn't always been easy to honor that commitment.

For when you, the Class of 2013, began your studies at UofL:

- Our national and state economies were still suffering from the worst economic downturn since World War II.**

- **During your time at the University of Louisville we as citizens of the world have seen civil unrest around the globe.**
- **On campus our challenges have included a flood, an ice storm, a wind storm, and last year's hail storm.**
- **We faced state budget cuts – in fact, 13 cuts in the last 12 years.**
- **We have often even faced a public that has raised questions about the academy, its integrity, and the value of a college degree at the very time when a college**

degree is more important, more important than ever.

But yet, you, nor we as a campus community, have flinched from these challenges.

In fact, over the years you have exhibited the traits and characteristics such as those that have propelled our athletic teams to their successes. You have believed in yourselves and have understood that you could accomplish whatever you set out to accomplish. After all, isn't this what our women's basketball team did as a 24½ point underdog to Brittney Griner and the Baylor

Bears, a team said to be unbeatable – but what was that final score? University of Louisville 82/Baylor 81.

You have known all along what was critical to our men’s basketball team’s success – the value of humility, respect for others, and that working together as a team we can accomplish far more than we can accomplish individually.

You, our graduates, have learned from the very best in the classroom. You have learned the theory and the content of your courses. But you learned more. You learned to

reason, critically think, and communicate.

You have learned life lessons that will ensure that despite whatever challenges you face in the future you will, you will, continue to make a difference in our community and this world in which we live.

Pause

And so on this very special day we think back to your Freshman Convocation when we gave you a baseball cap inscribed with CARDS and we said to you on that day we looked forward to this day, this day when we would exchange that CARDS cap for the

mortarboard you wear today as graduated of the University of Louisville.

Yes, very special things have happened during your years at the University of Louisville – your years as Cardinals. But great things will continue for you as our newest alums, because:

- You have the courage to question convention;**
- You have the passion to break new ground;**

- **You have the insight to champion community;**
- **You have the imagination to pursue the undiscovered;**
- **You have the will to achieve greatness;
and**
- **You have the promise of a limitless future.**

**You have been and you will be for life,
University of Louisville cardinals. You made
it Happen Here, here at the University of
Louisville, and you will make it happen in
your lives in the years to come.**

**So, Class of 2013, congratulations! And once
more I think I'll ask – is it a great time to be
a University of Louisville Cardinal?**

PAUSE

**UofL has outstanding faculty and staff
and outstanding academic leadership.**

**The captain of this great team is our
Provost and Executive Vice President,
Dr. Shirley Willihnganz.**

**As Dr. Willihnganz joins me, would you
join me in thanking her for her amazing
leadership at the University of Louisville.**