

Presentation to the Graduation Ceremony
The Nicholas School, Duke University
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Welcome 2007 graduates of the Nicholas School!

This is a wonderful and happy day for all of you—it represents the completion of several (or in some cases many) years of hard work at Duke and now the time when you can put that knowledge to use to ensure a better future for our planet.

You've been at the Nicholas School in exciting times. I think we will look back at the past couple of years as the time when America woke up. I am not sure whether it was the loss of a major city to the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, or Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, or \$3.00 gasoline, but 2006 looks like the beginning of a new realism in the American public. Our planet, its resources, and the bounty of the biosphere cannot be taken for granted.

Our own population is increasing rapidly and every individual who joins our ranks expects to share the resources of our planetary home. I wish it had come sooner, but I hope that 2006 is the time when we realize that exponential growth in a finite environment is not compatible. This is not a time to expect less, but to do more with what we have, and to do it better in new ways that fulfill our future.

Waking up to that reality is the first step; now we have work to do. That is where you come in, and I hope we have trained you well to do it. I can think of no better time when the job prospects of our graduates were better. Don't set your sights too low. There is much to do, little time in which to do it, and great stakes that rest on your success. This is a great time for a commencement—a beginning of your journey to a new phase of life.

Along the way, you will meet those who still do not believe in what you do: take the time, with patience, to educate them. You will see the chance to see personal gain at the expense of environment: please do not sell nature short. Among colleagues, you will see egos, self aggrandizement and greed: remember these have no friends. Work hard to follow the passion that brought you to the Nicholas School, but along the way, don't lose track of old friends and don't forget to have a little fun.

As you know, today is a commencement for me as well. I will remember y'all as the last class to graduate while I was Dean of the Nicholas School. I hope that I have done my job well, and that I do not lose track of you and your future successes in

life. Know that I will be out there too, working to ensure a livelihood for the biodiversity that shares our planetary home.

The Nicholas School—faculty, staff, and fellow students—wants to stay in touch with you. We like to see and hear what our students are doing. Visit us. And, of course, if we don't see you here, I can assure you that the Alumni Office will track you down with the tenacity of Homeland Security. Good natured, of course: they will simply ask you to help others to enjoy what you have enjoyed and to do what you are about to do.

I am proud to see you graduate today and to welcome you to the Nicholas School alumni family.