

**University of Maryland
Department of Communication
Commencement Speech**

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First, I want to thank Dr. Leah Waks and Dr. Elizabeth Toth and all the faculty for inviting me to speak to all of you today. You are all doing amazing things at The Department of Communication... keep up the great work. Second, I want to acknowledge the efforts of all of the graduates here today, who are anxious to receive their diplomas and all of the families joining them, for their tireless support. And a special thanks to Carlin Bokal and all of the others that worked so hard to make today possible. It is truly my honor to be with all you today and I am genuinely humbled by the opportunity to share this milestone with you and your family and friends. there is something very special about graduating in December and this chapel in the midst of the joy of the holiday season

So, I have to be honest with all of you. I explored a lot of different themes for today's commencement address.

Yeah, I had the one where I would be the "**FUTURIST**" and talk about how Communication is the single most important major on the entire campus because it is the greatest single thing that separates us from all other life beings. I would have addressed how Our advanced ability to communicate in so many ways continues to differentiate us and propel our evolution. I mean You know, the theme where all of you look like geniuses for choosing this major and exciting career path.... True? Of course. But you probably all already knew all of that

Then I started drafting the one where I would be the "**PHILOSOPHER**" and TALK about how communication serves as the glue and as the connector in all forms of business, government, policy, education, journalism, law, publishing and research and how without effective communication, the entire world would collapse and we would likely face extinction of the human race True? Of course. But you probably already knew all of that

Then I thought I would be a "**REAL HIPSTER**" and talk about communication being at the heart of all fashion, art, music and culture and really drive home the point that without effective communication, we as a people could not appreciate any of the things we treasure, any of the things that bring us pleasure, laughter and joy into our lives and how we would probably be living a lonely and barren existence in caves True? Of course. But you probably all already knew that.

Then I was determined to go "**GEEK**" and focus on how communication is propelling all advancements in technology, social media, creativity, innovation and science and then tell you all that without these developments in the field of communication, I was certain that we would

all still be living in the dark ages and we would not be able enjoy and maximize the amazing global connectivity that binds us together in ways that we never could have imagined twenty years ago and never will be able to imagine in the future.

And of course remind you that as we all struggle with the balance between expectations of privacy and expectations of intimacy and transparency, as well as dealing with the challenges of cyber security, data mining, the Internet of things, gamification, uberization, and all of the challenges that are ahead of us in determining what we communicate and how we communicate that all of you will be at the epicenter of the debate ... and the solution! true? Absolutely. But you probably already all knew all of that....

And then finally I was going to go “**JOCK**” on you and talk about how communication is the key to all success in athletics, coaching, teamwork, happiness, fitness, wellness and sound mental health. How teams of all types in business and in sports constantly cite communication among players as being the most important thing in winning championships and in growing companies and how the best coaches, mentors, advisors, and teachers have constantly cited effective communications as the one thing that propels their success. True? Of Course. But you probably all already knew all all of that.

So, running out of themes, I finally decided to just keep it simple. So, here are my top five reasons why It Is **WaySuperCool** to be sitting in your chairs today.

WaySuperCool Reason #1 – Welcome to Terrapin Nation. You are all turtles for life! But not that low to the ground slow moving kinda ugly type of picture that many of you just envisioned. I am talking about that “hard shell” and determination that protects you from all danger. I am talking about the ability to move forward on land or in water in all types of circumstances and to overcome all types of challenges. I am talking about the patience to move at a deliberate pace to get you and propel you to wherever you choose to go. And, most importantly, I am talking about being part of a community of millions of alumni that truly care for each other and who are willing to help one another at every turn. So “Welcome to the family.”

WaySuperCool Reason #2 – You now have the tools to succeed in many ways like no other major on this entire campus. You have taken courses and have been trained to deploy the tools of communication to thrive in almost any situation – in times of prosperity to propel growth, in times of crisis to mend fences, in times of chaos to bring calm, in times of conflict to bring resolution, in times of disagreement to bring compromise and solution, in times of despair to bring hope, and in times of confusion to bring clarity.

YOU are trained to be the liaison, the catalyst, the diplomat, the conveynor, the bridge and platform builder, the glue that mends a broken dialogue and the beacon to provide light at the end of a dark and cold tunnel. NO OTHER MAJOR teaches all of those skills, all of those disciplines, gives you all of those tools for life.

WaySuperCool Reason #3 – As Shakespeare once wrote, “There are tides in the affairs of men”

Well, for communication majors, 2015 is high tide. Never before in our history has communication been so important, so valued, so exciting as a career. Everyone needs help being a better communicator. This is your time to shine!.

- Politicians need help in communicating their messages in the cloudy and confusing sea that is our current political environment.
- Businesses need help in communicating the value propositions of their brands and the differentiation of their customer experiences in a sea of intense competition.
- Regulators need help in the communicating the reasons and the impact for the laws they pass.
- Artists and Musicians need help in communicating the essence and meaning of their work to the audiences that will embrace and enjoy them.
- Trade Associations need help in communicating the benefits of membership to their members and sponsors for sustainable recruitment and retention and ongoing support.
- Nonprofits need help in communicating their mission to their donors and the reasons why you need to support them.
- Universities need help in communicating their contributions to education, society and the advancement of knowledge to their students, to their alumni, to their faculty and to the families footing the tuition bills

And I could go on and on

but you all probably already knew all of that!

WaySuperCool Reason #4 – You are all at the heart and at the intersection of a brave new world of communication. Communication’s first cousin in the family of words is Community and we are building communities in both our business and our personal lives in very different ways than when I sat in your chairs in 1983. (I know what you all are thinking right now.... how did “this guy” manage to graduate college at age 10???) (Well, it wasn’t easy and dating was really tough...)

Technology and social media have propelled new types of communities and new forms of human connections and relationships that are evolving constantly and you are all at the epicenter of this activity.

How we communicate, when we communicate, who we communicate with and the effectiveness of that communication from the perspective of authenticity, transparency, genuineness, intimacy and shared values are all evolving in ways that pretty much locks in the path for dynamic and rewarding careers for Communications majors in the future.

You all hold the keys to the communications castle and the rest of us will be looking to you for guidance as to how we enter, what we see when we get inside, when we exit, and when we come back. You will help shape our views, our beliefs, our values, our experiences and our communities.

And saving the absolutely very best for last, I happen to have direct, empirical and undisputable evidence that it is WaySuperCool to be sitting in your chair (Wow, now that sounded like a lawyer....)

How? Why? Well, a short six months ago, I sat in your chair as the parent of a graduating University of Maryland communications major and I can assure you that WaySuperCool reason #5 is true because we are now living it every day.

Our daughter, Jennifer stood on this very stage in May of this year and immediately thereafter began her career at Environics Communications. She could not be happier. She could not be more grateful of the skills and experiences that she gained from this program, and from these professors ... and we could not be more proud of her accomplishments already. Judy and I are very confident that Jen ... and all you ... have very bright futures ahead.

Now ... Without compromising the confidentiality of any actual client matters, let me share with you some slightly edited texts I have received from Jen over the last 6 months:

- ❖ Dad, ... been working all day on the production of a new video series for a client to better communicate its brand values and culture. **I LOVE THIS STUFF.**
- ❖ Dad, ... can't make dinner with you tonight – been working on a critical social media audit for a key client of the firm and will be here late. You know I enjoy our dinners, but I am really into this and love the challenge.
- ❖ Dad, ... been working on a new proposal to help a non-profit better communicate its role and contributions TO OUR community. This is sooooo cool and sooooo fulfilling in so many ways. Gotta Run. More later.
- ❖ Dad, we are all working late on a new client proposal. It would be sooooo awesome if we landed this company as a client. I know we are going to win. We rock.
- ❖ Dad, I love it here at Environics. I love the work I do, the clients we have and most importantly, the people I work with – this place is so awesome.

Jen, we are so very proud of you. And to think that I wanted you to be a Smith School of Business Major here at University of Maryland, just because I have taught there for 28 years I mean, what was I thinking!!!

So, in closing, let me share a little secret with all of you as long as you promise not to tell anyone outside this chapel WE ARE ALL COMMUNICATION MAJORS or we certainly should have been

Thank you very much and only the best for all of your futures!!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew J. Sherman is a Partner in the Washington, D.C. office of Jones Day, with over 2,700 attorneys worldwide. Mr. Sherman is a recognized international authority on the legal and strategic issues affecting small and growing companies. Mr. Sherman is a top-rated Adjunct Professor in the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program at the University of Maryland for 26 years and Georgetown University for 17 years in both the business school and the law school where he has taught courses on business growth, capital formation and entrepreneurship and won numerous teaching awards at both schools.. In 2013, he was named by NACD as one of the Top 100 Leaders in Governance and in 2014, he was included in the global IAM 300, recognizing the world's thought leaders in managing intangible assets. Mr. Sherman is the author of twenty-six (26) books on the legal and strategic aspects of business growth and capital formation. Other recent titles include the best-selling **Mergers and Acquisitions from A to Z**, 3rd edition which was published by AMACOM in 2010. His twenty-third (23rd) book, **Harvesting Intangible Assets, Uncover Hidden Revenue in Your Company's Intellectual Property**, (AMACOM) was published in October of 2011. His twenty-fourth (24th) book, **Raising Capital**, 3rd edition was published in the Spring of 2012, his twenty-fifth (25th) book, **Essays on Governance** published in late Spring of 2012. His twenty-sixth (26th) book, co-authored with Elizabeth Vazquez, **Buying For Impact: How Buying From Women Will Change the World**, was published in February of 2013. Mr. Sherman can be reached at 202-879-3686 or e-mail ajsherman@jonesday.com.