



There must be some kind of mistake. Are you sure I am the one who is supposed to be giving the commencement speech? Oh, Well... I am probably just having another fit of the impostor syndrome. People tell me it's a professional disease, in case you didn't know it, the Ph.D. population is a risk group for contracting it. Once you get it, it's with you for life. And, yes, it's also highly contagious. In fact, if you have ever asked yourself whether you deserve a Ph.D. – then you already have it, I mean the syndrome. But trust me on this, you are NOT impostors.

So, how does one get it? I mean... the Ph.D. As you probably already know, it's a high-risk high-reward game. Placing a bet on Ph.D. is a big gamble and completing this game without going broke involves a lot of luck. But if you made it here, it means that, against all odds, you bet on the right advisor, you bet on the right research problem, and, most importantly, you knew when to cash in. Actually, the rumor has it that you only deserve a Ph.D. when you realize that enough is enough, and that in your dissertation you only need to solve 1 problem.

So *what* kept us going all these years? Our wise advisors who believed in us at the times when WE didn't, helpful secretaries who patiently reminded every time we tried to miss a deadline, companions in misfortune who secretly thought that if they had to suffer through qualifiers and prelims then so should we. And they ALL gave us a hundred of different reasons why we should not quit Ph.D. for some lucrative but boring job – and they were right, at least, in a few of those reasons. And, of course, our loved ones: our parents, our spouses, our partners, whose unwavering love and unconditional devotion kept us afloat. All those who suffered

along with us, deserved this Ph.D. no less than WE did. Don't *ever* forget that. And so we kept on pushing...

What kept ME going and what, probably, brought me here on this podium today was the social impact of my research. For the past 5 years, I have been working with people who had severe vision impairments. By observing the real problems they had in browsing the Web, I developed techniques to reduce the inequality of Web access. It's NOT the prospects of making a fortune that kept me going, but the *realization* that by solving even a *few* of those accessibility problems, I could make a *significant* impact on the quality of lives of real people. And that has given me the kind of energy and inspiration I did not think I had in me.

So what have we learned in these years? We have learned the value of an idea, the value of a vision, the value of perseverance. We often learned by osmosis, by trial and error. We stumbled, but picked ourselves up and kept pushing on. And that IS the Ph.D. process. We are now the pioneers standing at the forefront of sciences and arts. And, yet, I am sure, we have ALL been humbled by the realization that, after being in school for sooo long, we still know nothing. And this is the point when we have finally deserved our Ph.D.s

A Wiseman once told me, that when one door closes, another one opens for you. So, at last, this day has come, and you are standing at the doors on the way out of this great University. And, as the doors are closing behind you, I hope that with the skills you have acquired here, many new doors are opening for you now. So, choose wisely, choose to make a difference.

Thank you, and congratulations to the class of 2010!