Members of the class of 2014, our newest alumni: We are honored by you, and honored to celebrate your achievements with you. In a few moments you will embark upon new adventures, new callings. You may imagine what awaits you but you never really know. After all, as my favorite philosopher, Jedi Master Yoda, said, “Always in motion, the future is.”

Judging by your activities and accomplishments of your years at Catawba, you are indeed a generation in motion, a generation who will shape the future. You will not be shaped by it. And yet I am supposed to “charge” you – to send you forth with a command of what you should do.

Eleanor Roosevelt said that, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Please know that Catawba believes – and has always believed – in the beauty of your dreams. One good example of that was on display earlier this year when alumnus Richard Steinert returned to campus. When he graduated some years ago he became a professional dancer with the Joffrey Ballet in New York City but his aspiration was to create his own dance company. He did just that and this spring he brought the company to campus for a week of workshops and rehearsals that culminated with a performance on this stage. Our students performed works done by the professional choreographers – and the professional dancers performed works created by our students. It was a wonderful experience for everyone. When Richard introduced the performance that night he told the story of his journey to and from Catawba and he said, “When I came to Catawba, I already knew HOW to dream. Catawba taught me what TO DO with my dreams.” We trust that the same is very true for many of you as you depart today.

So, should I charge you to go forth, to pursue a life of purpose and of service? Of course – and you should.

Should I charge you to go forth, to approach every opportunity and every challenge with enthusiasm, persistence, and good will? Of course – and you should.
Should I charge you to go forth, to pursue excellence and to make your alma mater proud? Of course – and you should.

But perhaps Steve Jobs said it best in his magnificent commencement address some years ago: “[H]ave the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”

Catawba will watch and support you as you follow your hearts and your intuition – and we will celebrate proudly with you as you reach your highest potential. In the words of our Alma Mater:

“Rich and glorious be thy future,
   World of influence wide.
   And with us, who bear thy culture,
   May thy precepts and spirit abide.”

And now we want to give one last, important message from the College to our newest graduates – one that I hope you will take to heart and take with you as you go. Know that if you ever face obstacles, if you ever stumble, that with the support of your family, your friends, and your Alma Mater, you will rise again. ...