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Presidential Honors entering class of 2000

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GOOD MORNING everyone. When I was first asked to speak today I was very honored to be given the chance to come back to the Tarleton and say thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity and the experience to accomplish all that I have since graduating last May. Thank you to the faculty for giving me the confidence and knowledge to maneuver in the business world, and thank you to the donors of the scholarship that enabled me to get through school when, otherwise, financially I don't know that I could have been able to. After I was done being honored, then I started worrying about what in the heck I was going to talk about. After all, I only graduated 11 months ago. The only two real differences were that I now had a new car and a different job. Well, since one led to the other, I thought I would focus on my trials and tribulations in the workplace. When I graduated the job market wasn't—lets be honest—that great. Attempting to start with a bang, I printed up about 100 resumes, on very nice paper I might add, and started mailing and faxing them to everyone who had an add in the Career Builders section of the paper. I was also giving one, two, or ten to anyone who would take some. This led to interviews all right, but not really any that were good options. I could either make \$1,500 a week selling vacuums or I could pay \$50 so the company could do a background check on me. Huh, no thanks. When I finally arrived at an honest-to-goodness real interview, I was so surprised that I almost blew it. I could not seem to remember which add that I had answered that had led me to that particular place. I didn't ever remember but was keyed in rather quickly to what I had applied for ... an accounting position.

Fast forward to last week when first being asked to speak to you this morning. As my first step I went and asked the office manager of the company I work for, Litex Industries, which is the largest wholesale distributor of ceiling fans in North America. What does that mean, you ask. Well, it means that we don't actually make the ceiling fans; we import them from China and sell them to retail companies in the United States—kind of a self-important middle man if you will. Anyway, back to the office manager: I went into her office and asked her why I was hired when I applied last June to a position that had very little experience in. After all, my degree was in political science and I got hired in as a staff accountant. I then stopped because I realized that she didn't know the extent of my inexperience, which I will get to later. She looked at me a little funny and then said that it was my education that got me the interview, and especially the fact that I graduated with honors in the Presidential Honors Program. She said the in the interview I appeared confident and knowledgeable and she used the word "mouthy," which apparently, in her eyes, was a good thing. So my education, and especially my participation in the Honors program got me in the door, and the grooming and training that I received in that same Honors program got me the job. I realized

that all the Honors classes I had taken, especially those done in a seminar or roundtable discussion format, had really helped me in the interview process. For one thing I was very comfortable having conversations with authority figures, and once in the job I was very comfortable in a business meeting setting.

Now, back to my inexperience in accounting that I mentioned earlier. To give you a little background information and I would like to say that originally when I came to Tarleton I was an Accounting Major and this might have come up in the interview. However, what did not come up was that I had only taken one class in accounting and was an accounting major for less than a semester. I thought that if I could get in the door I could wing it. While I managed to get in the door, the winging it part took a little more effort than I had first anticipated. I soon realized that I didn't know all that much about accounting; in fact, I rarely balanced my own check book. However, whenever my boss asked if I could do or get something done I said of course and then proceeded to first freak out and then figure it out. How does this relate to honors classes, you are probably asking. Well, unlike many classes, when you are in an honors class they don't usually hold your hand and tell you point by point how to do something. They leave a lot out there for you to figure out on your own. There is a bigger possibility for failure but also a much larger possibility of something truly unique. That's how I now like to think about myself—the very unique accountant. Except now, I am no longer an accountant. I received a promotion a few months ago. Now I am a lead sales administrator, and have been given the retail account that makes up around 75% of our company's income, that account is Lowe's. Just another position that I have zero experience in, as in I didn't even have one business course all though college. Hardly any room for error or failure there, huh? But as I said earlier, this was also a very unique opportunity which paid off in a big way. Our company was just recently named Lowe's Vendor of the Year.

IN CLOSING, I would like to say a few more thank yous. Thank you to the Honors Program for allowing and providing me the opportunity to attend a Political Science conference in New York City. I had a great time and that experience was invaluable to me as a learning experience. Thank you for the honors conferences that you allowed me to attend, and the educational outings that made this Presidential Honors Program about so much more than classes. Thank you also to all the Honors teachers that provided me with the ability to figure things out—be it Plato or accounting. I would also like to share a few things I've learned.

First, you don't ever really get away from "Response Required" emails. Bosses seem to be as fond of them as Dr. Clifford.

Second, just because you graduated with honors doesn't mean that you don't do stupid things. I have plenty of personal examples but will instead share one with you that happened yesterday to former graduate Jana Farrill. On her way to work yesterday she placed her all-important planner—she is, after all, in sales—on the roof of her car and then proceeded to get on the

highway. She glanced in her rearview and saw her planner bouncing cheerfully down the road. However, by sheer dumb luck, when she went to pick it up, it was a just a little worse for the wear.

And most importantly I would just like to point out that my varied experiences have taught me that what you get your education in is much less important than the type of education you receive. So thank you again for my education.