

## Graduate Commencement Address 2015



As many know, Zita Agazzi is also a former PSP student; last Saturday, she was the graduate student speaker at graduation. Like Jake Wilkerson, who represented the undergraduates (and the evening intensive students :-), Zita's speech rocked! I love her theme: **Inspiration, passion, and service.**

Awesome message; thanks Zita, and congratulations (again) to you and everyone who finished your degrees this year. We are thrilled for all of you.

Zita is pictured here with PSP Advisor Extraordinaire Judy King and undergraduate commencement speaker Jake Wilkerson.

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Members of the Board of Trustees, President Greig, Provost Ewald, Deans, Faculty, Families, and Friends.

Good morning, I am absolutely honored to represent the Graduating Class of 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our Faculty for their dedication and professionalism, and also to our Staff and Administration at NDNU, for all their help and support. During the years that I have spent studying here I have always been greeted with a smile, no matter which door I knocked on. *I am very grateful for the community I found as a student at NDNU.* On behalf of the Graduating Class of 2015, I would also like to thank all the families, friends and everyone who gave us the support we needed to make it this far.

I began my journey at NDNU back in 2010 as an undergraduate student in the School of Business and Management, and then, I came back as a graduate student in the School of Education and Leadership. *I chose NDNU twice, and I am really proud to be NDNU.*

Today I would like to talk about inspiration, passion, and service; traits that I am sure you will recognize in us, NDNU graduates before you.

While some of us turn to famous people, historical figures or heroes as a source of inspiration; I don't have a famous quote to begin this speech, because instead, I would like to ask all of you here today to take a really good look at the graduating Class of 2015: the biggest source of inspiration and the best example of passion are right here in front of you; wearing caps and gowns.

When reflecting on my entire experience at NDNU, I can say that it is evident that the community here *does* live and breathe the core values of the university. As a student I have, indeed, learned, worked, and grown together in partnership with both classmates and professors.

*As a student of a diverse background, I have felt respected, heard, and valued.*

And I have *experienced* what it means to serve, both during my undergraduate and graduate studies here at NDNU. I have seen my classmates transform senior seminar projects and theses into *real-world* projects, with outcomes which have made all levels of difference in the lives of people in our larger community. I spoke of inspiration, passion, and service; and today I would like to share with you some examples.

As an undergrad student, I have seen one of my classmates a semester ahead of me transform her senior seminar project, which started with a simple drive for clothing and toiletries, into a full-scale non-profit organization incorporated in the state of CA, currently serving 21 counties in an area of great need. And it all started here, at NDNU, as a capstone project.

I was so inspired by her work that I turned my own senior seminar project into an opportunity to help advance that particular, and then soon-to-be non-profit organization, and after serving in different roles, I eventually became a board member. Inspiration, Passion, Service.

During my Master's program, I can say that *passion* is what drove graduate research. I have seen my classmates use graduate research to dig deep into educational issues ranging from teacher preparation, satisfaction, and support; to best classroom practices; to how a particular at-risk group of students is being served in our public high schools; to the role of Catholic identity in Catholic schools in the area. Once again, Inspiration, Passion, and Service.

In sum, no matter the field, NDNU graduates know the meaning of service and its real-world application. My experiences are just a sliver of what NDNU students are capable of.

Fellow graduates, remember that that passion is there. Do continue to inspire and serve. None of us knows for sure what lies ahead, but we have surely seen, experienced, and done great things already, so have no fear. The "real-world" is *not* waiting for us after graduation today; the real-world is where we have been living as students at NDNU.

You make me proud to belong to this community. Congratulations to the graduating Class of 2015!