By Dr. John A. Roush, President

As we prepare to sing the College’s *alma mater* and hear the words of benediction, let me share several thoughts. I promise to be brief.

Thank you for these years you have spent with us. I am confident you leave Centre a better-educated person, one more capable of making a difference for good in the life of work and service that awaits you. I am hopeful you leave Centre a better person – one who views the world and its many people with a new sense of community, compassion, kindness, and understanding. A person prepared to be a citizen-leader who will work with others to find solutions to the challenges of his or her community, this nation, our world.

But, right now, let me invite you to close your eyes and remember your experiences at Centre. Let your memories of these days cascade across your mind. Remember, if you will, your first day at Centre. Your first roommate? Your best course? Your worst course? Your best friends? The person you worked hardest to like? Your greatest achievement? Your toughest loss? Your best day? Your worst day? All the laughter. Some of the tears. All the hopes. A few of the disappointments. Remember these days – never, ever forget them. You will come to treasure them over time, and this is a powerfully good thing.

Remember the people who made this experience possible for you. Take time on this day to thank your parents and family, the professors, coaches, and staff people who contributed mightily to your Centre experience. Let your friends know that you are in their debt for their friendship and support. Don’t miss any opportunities on this day to thank those who made this Commencement possible.

Three final thoughts – got to be three, you know. One, come back. Come back often to Centre, as doing so will remind you of these wonderful days and will help you maintain a sense of humility by reminding you who you were and from whence you came. You only get to be twenty-something once (actually nine times), but coming back to Centre will always remind you of that time, and this, too, is a powerfully good thing.

Two, go and do good things. Hold on to the ideals and high goals you have learned about and made your own. Believe and work for those things that are good and in the interests of all. Never give up on people, though they may give you reason to do so. Don’t settle for anything less than a life well lived. You must continue to “be your best, do your best, and finish each day with no regrets.” It’s essential you live this way. Be strong, but ever mindful of those who are weak. Be thankful for this country and its many freedoms as you travel across this amazing world. Remind yourself daily that you are blessed.

Three, your class has had a remarkable run, has begun a wonderful story – the details of which are too numerous to cite. You have seen and heard stories of greatness and courage on this very stage. Your class witnessed Centre being picked the #1 college or university in the South for the
first and second year. You helped us open Pearl Hall, the Campus Center, Young Hall, and the Brockman Commons. Like the classes before you, you have won numerous, prestigious awards that shower attention on you and your soon-to-be alma mater. You have won athletic championships and academic competitions in remarkable numbers. Eighty-six percent of you studied abroad at least once, and you contributed to our growing success the nation’s leader in Global Citizenship. Eighty-three percent of you and your classmates graduate today four years after you started – a percentage that is 20-plus percent higher than any other college or university in Kentucky and places Centre among the best in our nation. And, finally, you were the “students-in-charge” as we welcomed a General Election Debate to our campus on 10.11.12 – sharing Vice President Biden and Congressman Ryan with the nation and world, and giving us the chance to make Martha Raddatz our friend.

Your story here is strong – very strong. It now falls to you to continue the story, your story – stories of accomplishment, stories of doing right, stories of learning, leadership, and service, stories of passion and compassion, stories of extraordinary measure.

As you prepare to leave us, know that we – your professors, Susie and I, and all who have played some role in your Centre experience – wish you only the best. We look forward to hearing of your good deeds, your story. We stand prepared to help you again and again and again. We are proud of you. We will miss you. We love you. Godspeed!