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, 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 and 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 forget them.

Remember the people who made this experience possible for you. Take time today 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 of Commencement to thank those who made this day possible.

Three final thoughts: Yes, three – who’s surprised? 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.

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. Continue to “be your best, do your best, and finish each day with no regrets.” 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 – the details of which are too numerous to cite. As you prepare to leave us and head in all directions, recall that Ellie Weisel, who welcomed you to campus on the night before you began your academic life, reminded us that “The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.” And, at your final event as Centre College students, the
Bruckheimers reminded you that Thoreau encouraged all of us to “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the live you have imagined” and that Aristotle spoke truth when he said “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” Pretty impressive bookends to your story here at Centre! It now falls to you to continue your story – stories of accomplishment, stories of doing right, stories of learning, leadership, and service, stories of passion and compassion, stories of extraordinary success.

Now, 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!