

Just before I got up here, I had one thought running through my head. Don't fall down the stairs. I suspect many of you have had that same thought, if you've had class in this room. I mean could you imagine how embarrassing, or painful, that would be, especially tonight during this ceremony. Four years, or more, of chapter meetings, study table hours, recruitment events, ritual meetings and practices, community service events, maybe even an alumni networking event thrown in for variety have all built up to making it up or down these stairs.

We're almost there. But I caution you beyond this campus are many more stairs to fall on. Because that's what life is – a series of stairs, and certainly you're going to trip a few times.

When I reflect on our combined experiences at Minnesota State I'm energized though. I know we are ready for failure. It was the last minute banner painting, lip sync practices, preparing for a consultant visit, or frantically searching for any form of documentation for chapter of the year. Getting here, right now prepared us for the struggle.

Wow, not a traditional graduation speech, huh. Talking about failure and struggle. But as Mavericks, and even more so as Maverick Greeks, we know success is a chain of failures. Author and poet, C.S Lewis in fact says, "One fails forward toward success".

This can mean a lot of things to an individual college graduate. Reflectively maybe this is a past relationship or a class you retook. Looking ahead, maybe this will be a job you hate, or a money pit of a house, or even another failed relationship. The point is that there is no true failure possible to a graduate of this community because to get to this point we had to learn that every failure is truly an opportunity for greater future success. Each of those things taught you something. I don't think I've ever learned more about myself than from failed relationship, and while I withdrew from Human Physiology to save my GPA, I discovered my true passion for communication studies and higher education policy.

I challenge you all to find failure in your life. I challenge you to seek it out, to learn from it, and to make your successes greater through them.

Thank you,