

Work to be done for graduating students

BY G.P. "BUD" PETERSON

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With spring commencement ceremonies just two days away, I wanted to take this opportunity to speak directly to the graduating seniors, the advanced degree candidates and their families here at the University of Colorado at Boulder, to offer my thanks for staying with us as your chosen university. I also want to offer my heartiest congratulations for your many outstanding achievements.

I have no doubt that you have been transformed over the course of the last four or five years here at CU-Boulder. You have been enriched by your interactions with our faculty in the classroom, the laboratory, fieldwork and study abroad. You have awakened within yourself ideas, passions and pursuits that have changed who you are, and that harnessed effectively, might well change the world.

You have, no doubt, weathered personal and national tragedies such as the horrific events at Virginia Tech three weeks ago, and emerged with a humanity, perspective and strength that you did not know you possessed.

Right now, with your family and loved ones, and your sights set on Friday's ceremonies, all of this is, I'm sure, a blur. In time, however, it will move into greater focus. In fact, some of what you have learned here will come to you at times when you least expect it - a quote from Shakespeare that is just right for a news lead to the story you are struggling with; an aspect of monetary policy you might recall that brings focus and clarity to an evening news story, or an equation that pops into your head to help you solve a basic engineering problem.

These are just superficial examples. The real value of your CU degree will be realized in both a love of learning and the ability to keep learning throughout your life. This resiliency and resourcefulness are what distinguish American students in general and, I believe, CU students in particular, from those around the nation and the world. These two qualities will also be vital in assisting you to survive in a global century where lifelong learning will be a basic tool of survival and a basic requirement for success.

The world, for you, is about to become much larger and the stakes for success in it, much higher. You will not only compete against others here in the U.S., but against your counterparts around the world. That competition will be formidable. The People's Republic of China will, this year alone, graduate more honors students than the United States will graduate college students. The combined number of students studying computer science, engineering and mathematics in China and India dwarf the number of graduates from the United States in these and many other fields of study.

Looking at the political challenges facing us, you can be proud to have graduated from a university that was a leader in climate change long before it emerged as a national priority, and a university that valued a global perspective as a leader in producing Peace Corps volunteers, going back to the founding of the organization under President John F. Kennedy. You can be proud that your university is a national leader in producing astronauts, proving that the vistas of CU students truly know no bounds.

I know that many of you have persevered through some challenging times and endured some difficult issues while here at CU, but having weathered these, you have emerged understanding something about how the real complexity of issues is often buried in a morass of ideology, media sensationalism and conventional wisdom.

The wisdom you have gained by seeing all of this play out in person is anything but conventional: it has made you wiser and worldly. I am grateful to you for staying with us through the tough times - it is a tribute to you and to the University of Colorado.

The challenge for you now is to go out and make valued use of all that you have learned and all that you have become. I hope that in so doing, you do not forget your time here, your professors, your friends or your experiences. I hope you remain tied not just to Boulder, with its majestic beauty and vibrant community spirit, but also to the University of Colorado at Boulder. We need your passion and your commitment as active alumni to help us chart the future course of this great University so that we can take it to new heights and future successes.

As our own Norlin Charge to graduates so eloquently states, "The University consists of all who come into and go forth from her halls, who are touched by her influence and who carry on her spirit. Wherever you go, the university goes with you. Wherever you are at work, there is the university at work." On behalf of the faculty, staff, students, administration and alumni of the University of Colorado at Boulder, I bid you heartiest congratulations, Class of 2007. We all eagerly await the results your work to come. Or should I say - our work to come!

G.P. "Bud" Peterson is the chancellor of the University of Colorado at Boulder. "CU and You" will return in the fall once a month in the pages of the Colorado Daily, allowing CU administrators to speak directly to the paper's student readership on issues of importance and timeliness.