

Alumna and faculty member gives Convocation address

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The 2009 Convocation featured Dr. Cherese Winstead, DSU assistant professor of Chemistry, as this year's keynote speaker. Dr. Winstead is also a DSU alumna who has come home to give back academically to her alma mater.

Understanding the current DSU Student Government Association's theme of "Smart is the New Cool." Dr. Winstead decide to affirm that belief in the following Convocation address she gave on Sept. 10 in the Education and Humanities Theatre:

As an alumna of Delaware State University, I once sat where you sit today and believe me, the last thing I ever expected as a freshman is that one day I would stand before you as faculty of Delaware State University.

Students, you are living during an exceptional time, attending one of the greatest universities in the first state that helped to elect the first African American President Barack Obama, our nations Vice President from the first state of Delaware, Joseph Biden, the first administration to select the first black Attorney General, Eric Holder and the first Hispanic Supreme Court Chief Justice, Sonia Sotomayor.

These are tremendous advancements in our history of which you all played an important part... and you have the opportunity to pave your own destiny here at Delaware State University.

We know that the decisions we make have a effect on our future. As you make decisions in life, You need to ask yourself, "Will it, help or hinder my progress, and would I be comfortable with that same decision if it were broadcast on CNN or published in the local newspaper?"

Now, I want to engage you in another activity and I'll need full audience participation. I'm going to name two people and I want you to tell me which one made the best choice!

Donovan McNabbor Michael Vick? Donovan McNabb is a great leader and well respected quarterback in NFL. Michael Vick is a great athlete still struggling to regain his character.

The path you take is about the choices you make!

Muhammad Ali or Mike Tyson? Both are great fighters but Muhammad Ali is known for his character and leadership –a living legend, and Mike Tyson... well, let's just say he should have had a good meal before he fought Holyfield.

The path you take is about the choices you make!

JayZ or TI? Now some of you may have thought I was saying letters of the alphabet but these are actually hip hop artists. The answer is JayZ. He is clearly defined as a hip hop mogul. I know you like TI, but he's made poor choices plain and simple — he's in jail!

The path you take is about the choices you make!

Lebron James or Kobe Bryant? Even though Kobe Bryant made MVP and took the Lakers to the championship; Lebron James is well respected both *on* and *off* the court because of his character.

The path you take is about the choices you make!

Biggie or Tupac? Both are Hip Hop icons but *neither* made the best choices!

The path you take is about the choices you make!

Whitney Houston or Bobby Brown? Well...let's just leave that one alone.

The path you take is about the choices you make!

Last but not least...

George Bush or President Barack Obama? Please let us learn from our mistakes.

The path you take is about the choices you make!

So students...

To be a great leader... or not.

To study or not.

To graduate or not.

The path you take is about the choices you make ... *each and every day.*



Dr. Winstead said success or failure is all about choices.

Now the take home message is not to say that you won't make some bad choices in your life – life is about learning from the mistakes. The key is to minimize the negative effect of your decisions on yourself and others.

Remember, the path you take is about the choices you make.

But at the same time, students, let's not make the type of mistakes that involve academic probation, jail or bail. These are issues that students find themselves in due to poor choices. Please, let us find ourselves making choices such as, "Which graduate school should I attend? Which fellowship/ salary offer I'm going to accept?" or, "Should I go for a PhD, MD, or JD?"

Now is the time for you to choose between longevity vs. short term gratification – or the so called "5 minutes of fame" Let me give you examples of the outcomes when choosing one or the other.

A final is coming up in a core course, say Mathematics 101. You choose to cram instead of taking the time *all* semester to understand the material. And say you pass (by the skin of your teeth no less). You give yourself a high five, dap, pound or whatever. Your whole aim was just to get out the class because you don't want to...nor will you ever see it again, right? Wrong!

Take my word for it you *will* see it again, in some form or fashion, and you will have to learn it all over again! Longevity vs. short term gratification... Studying to learn vs. to simply pass.

Successful people are those that apply learned concepts. You cannot apply if you never comprehended the concept. Study to learn vs. to just simply pass (heads up: passing the class – that's the best case scenario).

Instead of choosing to be the big man on campus for a couple of years, being the 'flyest' female on campus, partying with the frat or sorors, or athletes... telling the stories of your famed football/basketball career and then having to answer the age old question "so you went to Del State...when did you graduate?" and not having an answer to that question (embarrassing).

How about being the man on the yard with the high GPA, the football player majoring in physics, the frat/soror with your goals in mind to be both smart *and* cool.

Quick question: out of all entering freshman, who do you think makes up the largest proportion of students interested in science and engineering? African American males make up the largest proportion of students interested and intending to major in science and engineering – but only 8.8% graduate. What happens? Longevity vs. short term gratification. Young men, we need you to finish.

So I charge you with setting your standard of being smart *and* cool. Young men, pull up your pants to be about business here at Delaware State University. Treat your peers with respect and not fashioned after what you hear on the airwaves. Young ladies, have your intellect be the first thing that a young man notices – intelligence is beauty. I promise, you can be a Michelle Obama too! And just remember, our First Lady chose the right man.

In a few years – and it will go fast – when all the parties stop, when your friends have married and moved on to raise families, and you're working in your respective professions. Smart will still be in style. Keep in mid that being "cool" without the being smart is merely a trend.

At Delaware State University, we think that it's cool to be smart. We urge all of our students to take charge of their future – no matter what anybody thinks. We encourage you to study hard; do not accept mediocre grades, and to take pride in yourself and your accomplishments. Some of the students here today who recently graduated from high school can attest to feeling that you could have done better, that you could have graduated as an honor student if you had only pushed yourself a little harder.

Well, here you have the opportunity to apply yourself and prove to yourself that you can and will do better. So I ask you to become the student you know you can be.

And while it's good to socialize and get together with friends, your main focus should be on your studies. It's good to have friends and value their opinions, but always remember to be true to yourself – your greater self. Remember the key to a successful academic career is to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you.

Hopefully, by now, you realize that the path you take is about the choices you make – so try to make good and informed choices.

When it comes to your studies, expect more of yourself, courses will become more difficult each year. Make sure that you dedicate the time to your courses to ensure a good academic standing and a sound comprehension.

We are proud of you and we want you to be proud of Delaware State University. We're glad you're here! Congratulations, God bless, I'll see you in Chemistry class. Hopefully only once!

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