

## Graduation speech

Good afternoon,

Mr. President of the University, Senators, Father Rector, Faculty, Staff, guests and all presents, but specially because today is your day, Dear students.

I love to walk, and actually I walk a lot, some times for few days sometimes for few months.

Over the last 30 years I experienced valuable lessons while discovering some of the most beautiful and challenging trails around our little world.

My dear Lvbs graduates, Today I would like to share with you on such an important date in your life what I have learned from walking and hopefully it will be useful in the coming kilometers of your life.

The way you walk and the way you live your life is a very powerful analogy.

I bring you 4 images to reinforce my point of view.

Whatever you decide to do in your future.

My objective is to help you achieve the very best of that future.

1 - On a normal hike, lets say from east to west during any given morning, if you look in front of you with the raising sun in your back, you will notice something incredible.

In front of you, a long and powerful shadow of your body is projected.

Whatever is your size (tall or short, skinny or overweight) you will see it 5 times bigger or maybe even more. This image is somehow similar to the image we have of ourselves when we are younger.

Looking at our shadow we think that there are no limits, we think that with such size we can do anything, we are pretty sure the route in front of us will be easy and we will reach our final destination without any problems.

### **Be careful!**

That shadow in front of you is not you, you are probably much smaller and not as strong you might think you are.

Life goes on, you continue to walk and the kilometers pass by, one by one.

As the sun rises, around noon, you will have that powerful star right above your head.

It is hard, very hard to proceed. The heat burns your lungs amplifying your pain and everything in front of you. Each kilometer seems to be at least 2 or three times longer than the previous one.

When you look at your shadow, on the ground, in front of you, your image is almost inexistent, your size might be just few centimeters, you basically disappeared and it might seem unbearable to continue...does it ring a bell in your own life?

### **Don't worry !**

That shadow in front of you is not you, you are much bigger and stronger than you might think you are.

Life goes on, you continue to walk and the kilometers pass by, one by one.

Towards the evening the sun starts sinking in the horizon, the road is shining, beautiful, peaceful. The only thing you can see, the only thing that matters is the fact that you are arriving at your destination, you will finally rest that night. You have done it!

If you look for your shadow in front of you, you will notice that it disappeared. Your Shadow now is behind you, whatever size ...it doesn't matter anymore.

Think about your life. When your ego stops interfering with your actions, reactions and thoughts you become free to walk, free of worries to achieve your goals.

Your shadow now, is only important for the people that are behind. You can lead them and if they follow you, they will also reach the final destination on that day.

**2** - The way sometimes is long, sometimes is very long, at times you can feel pretty lonely. Loneliness is not necessarily a bad thing.

Actually, your best ideas and Eureka moments will come to you in those long silent stretches where you and the divine keep a constant dialogue with the universe.

Loneliness might become a problem when you start feeling your legs tired and when the weight on your back gets heavier and heavier. Those are days you find out about muscles you were not aware they existed the day before.

Let me suggest you one thing, **Take your focus away from your little pains and worries**, if you do that, you will notice that you are not alone.

Along the way you can meet all kinds of people... when I say all kinds, you should read it really all kinds.

But to see this people, your first challenge is your own prejudice, a burden we all carry somehow in our backpacks.

Check for it regularly and before start talking with someone new, **unload your prejudice**.

Young, older, short, taller, white, yellow, conservatives, progressives, Ukrainians, Russians or Portuguese, you name it.

If you care to listen, everyone has a message to you, a little piece of the puzzle that **makes our life bigger than ourselves.**

Some of the people you will meet will walk by your side in silence, some will talk and some will talk a lot.

Sometimes they will lift your spirits and your spirits will lift your legs.

Sometimes, just by listening, you will find yourself saving the day of someone else.

When you walk there are always two directions, to give and to receive, and the more you give the more you will receive. don't worry about the extra weight.

**What you receive with love will never be a burden.**

Dont forget (specially on those hard days) You will never walk alone as long you pay attention around you.

**3** - There is a rule (probably the only rule), that when you walk, you should never break.

It is about your backpack.

Whatever you put inside your backpack, you will have to walk with it! Just like in life.

More or less experienced hikers and travelers know that you should not carry more than 1/10 of your body weight, but truly speaking, you will only understand what you can really take, when you start walking.

Somedays you will notice you can take more, somedays you have to take less. Just like in life.

The most important skill you need to master, is how good you become at mixing things and create perfectly, unperfected balances.

If you take only water, you sure will not be thirsty, but you might get cold at night. If you take only cloths, you will never show up on the pictures with the same shirt, but you might become very hungry.

**Find the unperfected balance** in your life and make sure you don't carry more than you can take.

If it becomes too heavy, probably you need to drop something.

But Don't worry, few kilometers up the road you will probably understand clearly the reason why.

**4-** Last time I checked on wikipedia, Travel is the movement of people between relatively distant geographical locations, it can be done by foot, bicycle, automobile, train, boat, airplane, or other means, with or without luggage, and can be one way or round trip.

**Just like in life!**

Graduates, there is no way. You make the way by walking and when you walk you create new ways. When you look back you will see the road you will never walk again.

Whatever way, trail or track you decide to take after your graduation try to keep in mind.

Nothing will change **everything** for the better, your best changes to succeed, personally and professionally is to focus on each step of the way, instead of being distracted by some kind of secret or magic solution for your problems or your challenges.

What we achieve its usually not defined by some big moment or event, instead, it is your consistency, resilience and capacity to accommodate change that will define the next kilometers of your life.

Step by step, by step, by step and by step.

make me and this school a favor  
make Ukraine and our world a favor

**never, never stop**.....Keep smiling to the world, because I can guarantee you that the world will smile back at you.

Thank you! and Congratulations!