Commencement 2011
Student Speaker

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To my fellow graduates, deans, faculty, friends, family, and cherished invited guests – welcome, to the beautiful Alice Tully Hall, and thank you for this opportunity to speak before you tonight.

Congratulations. You have earned it.

The road to such success has been long and arduous for many of us, but we have proven that anything is possible.

Congratulations to all of my fellow graduates tonight.

Special congratulations to my fellow first graduates of the MS in Business Management and Leadership.

We are making history by embracing and leading the online educational experience. I am sure that we will look back on this experience with a sense of pride and accomplishment for many, many years to come.

And a special thank you to all of the faculty members who have endured this online experience with us.

In spite of its virtues, and there are many, Blackboard has its challenges, but we have made it exciting and beneficial nonetheless. Who can forget the relentless questioning by Professor Harve Queneau in the Applied Business Research class? For example, in response to my post on the discussion board, he would write, “Bharat, You make a good point.” I wish he had stopped right there.

But he would continue, “What would be examples of negative symptoms?”, “What would be the specific management questions for this project?” and so on and so forth. Thank you -- You made it worthwhile and memorable.

So why am I here? Very simple. I want to be here among friends and family to mark this important occasion. I was reminded recently by my Director that I was the first to apply and also the first to be accepted in the new MS Program. But, like many of you, I am not a typical CUNY student. Who, really, is a typical CUNY student?

Looking around you, you will see men and women of various ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and interests. There is no such thing as a typical student in today’s
world of rapid change and advancement. Everyone must keep learning and must keep improving to stay relevant in the twenty-first century we live in.

It is that desire to keep learning that has brought me here. My journey began many years ago in a small town in India. I was born and raised there and went to an elementary school that did not have any classrooms. Our school had one enclosed room, which was used for storing instructional materials and paperwork. We studied under the trees, and experienced nature as it is supposed to be experienced. From those humble beginnings, my journey has taken me to some of the finest educational settings in the world, and I am grateful for everyone who has joined me and has played an incremental part.

This is actually my second master’s degree. I received my first from a technical university in Cambridge, Massachusetts -- MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the time it took to receive both degrees, the world has changed dramatically. For example, I took a course on computer graphics at MIT and spent an entire semester developing a program to move a rectangle from the left side of the monitor to the right. The year was 1978, and computers were in their infancy then. Today, we cannot do much of anything without them. The world has changed a great deal, and in ways that none of us would have imagined even a decade ago. Most of what I learned at MIT has been supplanted by ever growing advances in science, technology, medicine, building construction, architecture, media, and every other field that comes to mind. We cannot simply stand by and rejoice in our old educational accomplishments any longer. We need to reinvent ourselves in order to keep pace with our constantly advancing society.

That is my story. I am certain that all of us have a story to tell as well. Take a look around you, at those bright eyes and smiling faces. Each one of us can talk about our journeys, our strengths, our struggles, our hopes and our dreams. But above all, we exhibit a remarkable sense of dedication, drive and commitment to our ideals.

I wish you continued success in your current and future endeavors, and hope that you will use your CUNY education to improve your life and the lives of those around you. It has been an honor to be here and to speak before you tonight. Enjoy the evening, thank you and may God Bless us all.