

"The chances you take, the people you meet, the people you love, the faith that you have. That's what's going to define you!"

- Denzel Washington, 5/16/2011

As the son of a beauty parlor owner and a Pentecostal minister who had to work two jobs to make ends meet, Denzel Washington defied all odds and was admitted to Fordham University, a prestigious institution in New York City on a sports scholarship. He knew he could play basketball, but not much more. His first instinct was to enroll as a biology major with an ultimate goal to become a physician. As he wrote in his book *A Hand to Guide Me*, "*that did not work. Tried a pre-law course, that didn't work either!*"

In his book Mr. Washington shares how he found wisdom in many persons throughout his life. First his parents and schoolteachers, but significantly from a dean at Fordham who told him to take a break before registering for his sophomore year. After a period of indecision, he worked as an art director for a summer camp where he participated in talent shows. His colleagues suggested that he return to college and pursue acting. Mr. Washington did return to Fordham to study drama, graduated and the rest is Hollywood history!

The recipient of two Oscars and Golden Globes among other awards, Mr. Washington was the guest speaker at the University of Pennsylvania's 2011 graduation where he received a Doctorate in Letters, Honoris Causa. At the time, Mr. Washington told UPenn students that his most important accomplishment was to live by faith. An inspiration to younger generations, Mr. Washington told students to work hard because "*Hard work, works!* and to value themselves for who they were and not for their possessions. "*It's not what you have,*" said Mr. Washington. "*It's what you do with what you have!*"

Which takes us to celebrate our hard-working students. As we approach the end of this academic year, we may reflect on all the challenges that our students have endured during the past months. While our students moved from remote learning to in-person learning, national and international events, including a pandemic, wars and calls for racial justice, have impacted their way of life. Nevertheless, our students, who are the reason why any educational institution exists, have worked hard to complete this quarter exceeding all expectations. Like Associate Supreme Court Justice Hon. Sonia Sotomayor once said, "*I do know one thing about me: I don't measure myself by others' expectations or let others define my worth.*" Our students defined themselves by their hard work, their commitment to their education and their faith.

On June 19, 2022, La Sierra University will hold its first in-person graduation ceremony in two years while celebrating its 100th anniversary. On that day my son, Xavier André Torres-Vega will be walking along with other seniors to receive their degrees with dreams in their hearts and goals on their minds. Our students are the future, and as parents and teachers, it is our hope that we prepared them not only to conquer the world but to keep their faith.

We celebrate all of our students, especially our graduates and in my case my son Xavi, for having grace under pressure, for their commitment to their education and for their resilience. As parents and teachers, we are so proud of you!

We have invited SALSU President Steven Dorsey, also a graduating senior, to be our guest writer for this month's diversity message. We are honored that he agreed to share with all of us his view on diversity from a student's standpoint. We also want to thank Mr. Dorsey for his excellent work as a member of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council.

We are also sharing the link to Mr. Denzel Washington's speech at UPenn.

Many blessings!

<https://youtu.be/0FB9i7P9Zs4>