

Saint Leo University Graduate Commencement Speech

Delivered on 4/28/2018 by Niclas Bez

Good morning, everyone. First, I want to thank the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff for giving me the opportunity to speak today—and especially the Class of 2018 for allowing me to represent you. On behalf of the Class of 2018, I would like to express appreciation for all the professors who taught and guided us through our classes, and the staff who supported us along the way.

And most importantly, I extend a special thanks to all the parents, spouses, friends, and family who are joining us today. Without your support, we may not have made it here to receive our graduate degrees.

When I was asked to do this speech, I was a little nervous. Many of you have much more life and job experience than I do. However, if there is one thing that I want to share with you all, it is this: You can Google for an answer; you can Google for a University; you can Google for a career, but you can't Google to find what's in your heart.

Has anybody ever have their Plan A not work out?

We have all been there. Sometimes, following our hearts means adjusting our chosen path. Sometimes we choose to change our path. Other times we are forced to do so.

Inventor Alexander Graham Bell wrote: "When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us."

In my case, I was forced to my Plan B and the new open door was not clear to me. My initial dream was to become a professional athlete. When I missed the standard for making the National Team by only seconds, this door closed. After a few weeks of feeling pity for myself, I started searching for open doors. I found an amazing one when I first heard about Saint Leo University.

This institution made it possible for me to get great education, while competing in collegiate athletics. And that's not all. The education and the relationships that I have made here opened many more doors for my future.

So whether Saint Leo University was your Plan A or your Plan B, you found your way to a graduate education that will surely open new doors for each of us – whether you are just starting your career like myself, or whether this degree is the next step to advance in your career or to make a major life change.

When we first started our programs, we may have felt a little overwhelmed—overwhelmed with the class work, overwhelmed with the high standards that the professors set for us, and overwhelmed keeping up with responsibilities outside our classes. The fact that we are here today shows that we each found our own way to handle the pressure.

So in my case, I stepped back and considered how my classes correlated a lot with my experience in athletics. Since I had the honor to run track for Saint Leo, I told myself: “Hey, why don’t I just take this MBA journey like I do a 1,500-meter run on the track?”

At the beginning of the 1,500-meter run, it is very hectic. You might feel overwhelmed. There is a lot of pushing with the people around you, but as you find your pace, you start to feel more comfortable. The great thing is that you are not by yourself. Just like having your coaches and friends on the side of the track, you have your professors, classmates, friends, and families on the sidelines during your master’s program.

So, the last four months to me felt like entering the last lap in the 1,500-meter race. The bell rings and you feel a rush of energy to finish as well as possible. As you see the finish line, you start realizing, “Hey, I almost made it.” Then after you finally cross the finish line, you feel the endorphins coming up in your body as you have accomplished this goal.

Congratulations! We are at the finish line right now! All of us have overcome challenges and hardships along the way, but realize that these challenges just make us stronger.

So, whatever our next 1,500-meter run, our next Graduate Degree, or our next challenge in life is. WE GOT THIS!

To end my speech, I want to leave you with my favorite Bible quote from the Book of Isaiah that helped me overcome hardships in my lifetime, and I hope it can do the same for you.

Isaiah, Chapter 40, Verse 31:

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Thank you and God bless you all. Congratulations!