

AS PREPARED MIAMI UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
OHIO GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE
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Fran and I want to congratulate all of you in the Miami Class of 2020! And, congratulations also to your parents, family, friends, and all those who have helped you over the years. This is your day, as well!

This is a special Miami class for us, as three of our grandsons -- David, Jacob, and Matthew -- are graduating today.

It has been over a half-century since Fran and I first came as students to Miami, and it remains for us such a very special place. Our Miami experience was not typical. I followed my girlfriend here, and we were married between our second- and third-year.

Our son Pat and our daughter Jill we're both born while we were students. Both of them would attend and graduate from Miami, both would marry Miamians, and both would have sons born on the same day, who are both graduating from Miami today.

Two of our other children -- John and Alice -- and our son-in-law Bill are also Miami graduates. Our granddaughter Grace is concluding her first year here, and our grandson Brian will be starting in the fall.

Your experience as seniors at Miami has been unique. When I ran for Governor, I certainly did not expect I would be dealing with a once-in-a-hundred years pandemic!

As I look back on how Ohioans have dealt with the coronavirus, the first chapter was really written right here on this campus, when in January, some of your fellow students returned from China and then exhibited symptoms of the coronavirus.

The students and Miami both did what they should have done, with the students isolating themselves and Miami's health service, the Butler County Health Department, and the state health department getting involved. We all breathed a collective sigh of great relief when the tests came back negative.

But, the Ohio coronavirus story had begun.

Now, as the beauty of springtime in Oxford surrounds us -- as we weary of this virus -- I am reminded of what the great World War II leader Winston Churchill told the British people at a time during the War in 1942 when they had grown tired and must have felt that it had been going on for a very long time. This is what he said:

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

We have fought well, but this pandemic is a marathon, not a sprint. You will look back on this time as past generations have looked back at other times when our country has been sorely tested. Your children and grandchildren will ask, “What was it like? What did you do?”

It is usually a war or some other great calamity that brings us together as a people -- that makes us feel that we ARE all in this together. In those times, our soldiers at the frontline have been backed up by a whole country of people making sacrifices.

Today, our nurses, paramedics, those who work in our prisons, our nursing homes -- and yes, those who stock the shelves at our grocery stores -- are our soldiers. Our support for them is different, but no less important than what past generations have done to support those at the frontlines.

Each of us can contribute; Each of us must help. You will never have a greater chance to impact so many by what you do -- seemingly little things -- but things that matter. Things that will make a difference.

Keeping six feet apart.

Wearing a mask.

Dropping off food for an elderly neighbor.

Staying in touch with your grandmother by Skype, a call. or even a letter.

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, reflecting upon World War II, once said:

“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, ‘I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.’”

I believe that. These hard times make us stronger.

Today, you are tougher than you were.

We all are.

Many of you don't have a job yet. And many of you who do, aren't sure if that is what you really want to do. I understand.

I started at Miami as a business major, graduated as an education major, and thought I was going to be a high school history and government teacher. But, life can and will take many turns.

Fourteen years ago, I was in my 12th year in the United States Senate. I loved it -- and thought I was pretty good at it! But, in 2006, I lost my race for re-election.

But, the day after the election, I called Miami's president and asked him if I might come and teach -- and amazingly, he said yes!

I loved it -- and the best part was the interaction with the students!

Around that same time, we learned that my father's pancreatic cancer had returned, and that he was going to die. But -- because we were back in Ohio -- I was able to spend time with both my parents in their final months -- time that I never would have had with them had I still been in Washington.

And a few years later, at an age when most people would have happily retired -- and many thought I should have (and some still do!) -- I ran for office again -- and won!

You will learn more from your losses, from your mistakes, and from your failures -- than from your successes. As I make some of the toughest decisions of my life in dealing with this terrible virus each day and as we work to get our economy moving AND protect our citizens, I try to remember what I have learned the hard way.

The biggest mistakes I have made have been when I did not get enough facts, did not ask enough questions, did not consult the right people, and when I did not dig deep enough.

I have also been sorry when I did not follow my instincts -- when everyone else seemed to be going a different way, and when I figured, "Well, THEY must be right."

So get the facts.

Dig deep.

Then trust your gut.

Each of you graduating today has such great opportunities ahead to be bold and take some chances on life. Along the way, you will face tough, life-changing decisions. You will face disappointments and challenges and losses. But when you do, know that -- sometimes -- the best is yet to come!

We will come out of this. We will be stronger. Our scientists and our business people -- and among them now many of today's graduates -- will be the ones to find new treatments and a vaccine and innovative and creative economic solutions.

We will value personal relationships more.

We will value family more.

And, we will understand better how we all truly ARE tied together.

To the class of 2020 -- we wish you the very best. You ARE Miami. Each of you has so much to give that will help others. Through “love and honor” you will make a difference in this world.

Thank you.