

2022 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

DON SHELTON '76



Hello, Vandals! Before we get started, can we welcome to all fellow Vandals. Welcome, family, friends and me in congratulating the University of Idaho's graduating class of 2022! I am so here today.

A commencement speech is supposed to be a soaring tribute full of inspirational, uplifting words that go out into the world, believe in yourselves and do great things!

And you: This won't be that kind of speech. Before President Green walks up here and podium, let me explain.

What I give that kind of speech is simple: How can I possibly inspire you when all of YOU are inspiring ME for two years?

You arrived in Moscow two, three, four or more years ago expecting a college experience every young person dreams about— at this gem of a university, in this remarkable, little college town, in this special corner of the Pacific Northwest. You prepared for one of life's first great tests. But the true test was something no one saw coming. A little thing called a worldwide pandemic happened. You

lived through the economic challenges of the 1930s and the social unrest of the 1960s—all at once. And that craziness was magnified by social media and a 24/7 news cycle.

You may have felt like quitting. At times I'm sure you probably felt hopeless and helpless, anxious and angry. But here you are.

You didn't give up, you stayed focused and you kept battling. And it brought you here, on this spring day to bask in an achievement even more worthwhile because you had to fight through so much.

I'll say it again: YOU inspire ME!

Now let me take you on a trip back in time. Come with me back to my college days— way back— not 30, not 40, but almost 50 years ago. Are you with me? Can you see my platform shoes, neon red bell-bottom pants, flared collars and shaggy hair? Please ignore that. Forget the blacklight posters on my wall and the lava lamp on my desk. Beyond my questionable fashion and decorating choices, I have the first of two confessions to make: My college experience was easier than yours.

