2015 May Commencement Kay Isaacson-Leibowitz '68

Thank you, Kristin, for that introduction.

Thank you Dr. Vaughn, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the administration and faculty, family and friends of the graduates, and, most importantly, you, the members of the Class of 2015. I am deeply honored and humbled to be with you today.

I graduated from The University of Tampa in January of 1968, and I never imagined I would be back here today giving the commencement address, nor did my professors, parents or friends. While I was an undergraduate, I was a solid C student, hated 8 a.m. classes, majored in French, which certainly narrowed my career options, and had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up. Sound familiar to any of you?

What I did not fully comprehend at that time was how my experiences and my education at The University of Tampa had prepared me for the future. I was given the tools and empowered by my professors and my peers to become a leader on campus. Each one of you will leave today with tools and experiences from your four years at UT, which will have prepared you for your journey.

So, as I thought about what I would say to my 21-year-old self, knowing what I know today, I say to you, "You are in for a great ride! Be open to all possibilities!"

I want to talk about three things: curiosity, love and to live your dream.

CURIOSITY

Decades ago Einstein urged us to "never lose a holy curiosity." And Walt Disney said, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we are curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Brian Grazer, one of the most successful producers in Hollywood with film credits that include *A Beautiful Mind* and *Apollo 13*, along with TV hits such as *24* and the currently red hot *Empire*, just co-authored a very powerful book on curiosity with Charles Fishman called, *A Curious Mind: The Secret To A Bigger Life*. I highly recommend this inspirational book.

In it he writes, "Curiosity has been the most valuable quality, the most important resource, the central motivation of my life. I think curiosity should be as much a part of our culture, our education system, our workplaces, as concepts like creativity and innovation."

Curiosity is my most prized trait. It has pushed me to make bold decisions, to be a courageous leader, to be passionate about my life and my career. Curious people are good listeners and say what needs to be said. Curiosity encourages risk taking. Curious people are not afraid to fail; through disappointments they gain clarity and create opportunity. Curiosity drives out of the box

thinking, courageous actions and bold results.

So, be curious, develop your own compass and trust your instincts.

Actor Ed Helm said in his address at Knox College, "So long as your desire to explore is greater than your desire to not screw up, you're on the right track. A life oriented toward discovery is infinitely more rewarding than a life oriented toward not blowing it."

LOVE

Success is finding what you love to do, what you are passionate about! I recently read this quote. "You can Google for an answer, you can Google for a mate, you can Google for a career. But you can't Google to find out what's in your heart, the passion that lifts you skyward."

Keep your family and loved ones close, they will keep you "real." My Dad, an Air Force general and a fighter pilot during World War II was skeptical about my career choice. As time went on and he witnessed my successes, he came to the conclusion that I had chosen a good path after all. In 1995, I went to Victoria's Secret as executive vice president, chief merchant. Victoria's Secret, one of the most recognized brands in the world, a multi-billion dollar business, big financial package and a Gulf Stream 4 was my new ride. I could hardly wait to tell my parents. I had arrived! I called home. Mom was gushing and Daddy said nothing. Finally I said, "Dad?" He said,