First, let me say that it is an honor to speak at your congratulatory services. Your class holds special significance for me because I too arrived on this campus around the same time that many of you did Fall 2002.

I look out, and I see you the graduating class of 2006. You who have leaned wit it and rocked with it, struggled, cried, prayed, survived, but most of all accomplished. I applaud you for your great tenacity and your ability to complete what you have started. As you stand on the edge of today peering into tomorrow, I implore you to remember that each step that you have etched in the soil of Indiana University and across this state and nation was envisioned by those who came before you. If you look closely, you can see our ancestor’s imprints in the
soil—your steps and my steps have been greatly cushioned by theirs. Our ancestors have long bulldozed and stepped through hatred, hurt, discrimination, and disappointment in order to lay a strong foundation for you, me, ALL OF US HERE TODAY. Although it may have felt at times that you were alone here at Indiana University as you engaged in various intellectual endeavors, the truth is that you have never been alone. You have been cradled and cultivated by greatness—if you take a moment to just stop and think—you will realize that you have been treading over extraordinary steps—
those who have made great contributions to this Institution and the world in which we live, the trailblazers: Mr. Marcellus Neal, Mrs. Frances Marshall, Mrs. Elizabeth Bridgewaters, Dr. Herman Hudson, Dr. James Holland, Dr. Samuel Dargan, Mr. George Talieferro, Mr. Bill Garrett. Then there are those trailblazers who are still in our midst that we often take for granted: President & Mrs. Adam Herbert, Vice Pres. Charlie
Nelms and Mrs. Jeanetta Nelms, Ms. Cora Breckinridge, Mr. David Baker, Mrs. Janice Wiggins, Dr. James E. Mumford, Mr. Cameron Beatty, Ms. Eboni Gatlin, and Ms. Melanie Sims. They contributed to your journey her at Indiana University, one SMILE at a time, one TOUCH at a time, one STEP at a time. See, you have never been alone but surrounded by love and greatness, MOST OF ALL, PEOPLE WHO VALUE DIRECTION. This might sound strange --but I ask at this time that you look down at your feet. Not your neighbors—but yours- now, some of you are looking down at your feet admiring pedicures, Kenneth Coles, Air force ones, those new Coach shoes, that you bought for graduation, and even secretly coveting your neighbors shoes, BUT WHAT I WANT YOU TO REALIZE IS THAT YOUR FEET— ARE MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN THE SHOES THAT YOU ARE WEARING. They symbolize the steps that You Have Taken And Will Take. They represent direction. You see our ancestors, they did not dress their feet in Coach and Kenneth
Cole; instead they wrapped their feet in rags of humility, perseverance, and vision. It is because of their vision, you and I are able to possess far more than they could ever imagine. You must know that your steps and every step that you have made and will make is an Awesome One. Class of 2006, you must step boldly with great humility, perseverance and vision. Always remembering that when you feel that you can’t step boldly, pause and think critically about your steps—

In closing, just as our ancestor’s feet created great paths for us—YOU, NOW, THE CLASS OF 2006 HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE PATHS FOR OTHERS. You must be mindful of the direction that you take and conscious of the sacrifices of those who came before you and the great paths that they etched out—YOUR STEPS ARE ORDERED! I ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEAVE THIS INSTITUTION WITH ZEST AND ZEAL MOVING SWIFTLY, IT IS MY HOPE THAT YOUR FEET ARE CONTINUOUSLY BLESSED WITH THE WISDOM AND
PERSEVERANCE OF OUR ANCESTOR AND THE DIRECTIONS YOU TAKE WILL BIRTH GREAT FORESIGHT AND VISION THAT WILL SUSTAIN FUTURE GENERATIONS. MAY YOU CONTINUE TO FOLLOW IN the FOOTSTEPS OF GREATNESS.

AGAIN, I CONGRATULATE YOU CLASS OF 2006.