

# ESU Graduate School

## 2010 Class Commencement Speech

### *“Relationships” and “Adaptability to Change”*

By Charles T. Taylor, II, Ph.D. '84, '86

Thank you Dr. Dillman, distinguished members of the ESU faculty and staff, students and family. What a humbling honor to return to the University, where I developed my educational foundation for life, and impart some of what I have learned over the years since graduating ESU in 1984 & 1986. First and foremost, I'm sorry to disappoint those of you who believed that your commencement speaker today, “Chuck Taylor”, was the *“Sneaker guy”*, but at least when someone asks you 20 years from now, “who was your commencement speaker when YOU graduated”, perhaps you'll remember and say, *“Chuck Taylor – I'm sure you've heard of him!!”*

So, **Congratulations to the Class of 2010.** You have much to be extremely proud, and have accomplished something which no one will be able to take from you -- **your degree.** You've persevered many long hours of hard, yet hopefully, enjoyable work, while at other times, you've endured pain, both real and perceived, to accomplish something which will either start you on your career and path in life, or give you an excuse to speak to your boss and ask for a raise!

Today, I wanted to focus upon two themes, RELATIONSHIPS and ADAPTABILITY to CHANGE. These two concepts have impacted my personal success from my educational endeavors, to my technical or engineering career, to my business, and my personal life.

I'd like to start with a story of when I was here at ESU. ..

It's as if it happened yesterday, when my father dropped me off at ESU as a freshman. I clearly remember unpacking my necessities of college-life, my Texas Instruments TI-59 calculator, a killer 35 watt Yamaha stereo, clothes, and a Farah Faucett poster for my walls. I remember looking down upon the parking lot facing Normal Street as my Dad drove away, and naively thinking to myself, "*I'm on my own*", finally. I'm ready to make a splash. Little did I know at that time, I was only embarking on a new journey which would instill a life-long necessity, that God was imposing upon me... The '**Need for RELATIONSHIPS**' and being '**Adaptable to Change**'...

During my college career at ESU, from 1980 to 1986, I recognized that "change" was sometimes good and sometimes "bad". I wasn't an exceptional student; in fact, I was mediocre at best. I certainly struggled my earlier years in college, and

nothing came easy for me, however I was persistent. I spent most of my time working hardest on my Computer Science courses.... but even they were challenging for me – yet that was my MAJOR and I needed to succeed there. There truly was a sense of self-accomplishment whenever I completed a programming problem. Ultimately, I earned a ‘B’ in my first computer science course at ESU, entirely out of sheer determination to succeed, and quite honestly, many times, trial and error.

At the beginning of my second semester, my struggles continued. To this day, I very vividly remember, sitting in my dorm room by myself, after struggling to figure out how to begin another new programming assignment, just released. I broke down in tears, because I knew that I was in over my head, and really couldn’t make headway without someone’s help. I began thinking about my brothers who were succeeding in their college ventures, one at Rutgers University, another at MIT, and wondering why I was placed ‘last in line’ for brains in my family. I wondered if God had placed “brain quotas” on families, and my two older brothers got there first. That day, while sitting in my dorm room, I realized I needed help or I would probably fail out of the major. The following day, I mustered up enough courage to go speak to my Computer Science professor, Dr. Richard Prince. **Looking back, that was a pivotal decision in my**

**life.** When I walked into his office, he immediately embraced not only his role as a professor, but as role-model or mentor. He embraced me as if I were one of his own children, as any father would do - and quickly recognized my distraught state, angst and stress. He spent the next 2 hours, even after his wife, Dr. Debbie Prince, a Professor in Mathematics here at ESU, had called him home for dinner. He worked with me until he knew I truly understood the assignment and was able to complete it to **HIS** satisfaction. That was one of my first true lessons in building RELATIONSHIPS to garner success.

Ironically, in the years that followed, from my freshman year, when I barely managed to earn a 2.0 GPA through earning a perfect GPA my senior year at ESU, and my entire graduate education, I began to recognize that **relationships** were of utmost importance. Professor Prince and I, developed a long standing student/professor relationship and met 7 more times in Computer Science classes and many times in his office for special tutoring, before I ultimately graduated as the first Computer Science Master's Student at ESU in May, 1986. Upon completing my Doctorate 4 years later, Dr. Prince was one of the very first people, beyond my family, I contacted. I knew he would be proud of his student. Upon informing him, for the first time, he told me to not call him Dr. Prince nor Professor Prince, but rather by his first name, "Dick", as he now considered me his

colleague. At that moment, I realized that I had accomplished something special - what many had doubted, including myself at times, I had driven toward a dream, and lived it out – I had not taken an easy route, but a difficult one – I wasn't interested in living under the guise of other's thinking, but one which I believed in, to make my career, and ultimately, my life more fulfilling. I summoned the help of RELATIONSHIPS many times along the way, and ultimately accomplished a dream.

I offer this lesson to each of you. Life is too short to live life for someone else's dream, or as Steve Jobs, The founder of Apple Computer, Next, and Pixar, has stated, *"Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice, heart, and intuition. "*

In the years that followed, I stayed in touch with Dr. Prince, obviously never being able to call him by his first name because it was unnatural. I periodically visited him at the University or sent an email just to say hello. This pulsing of the relationship continued for many years. One day I sent him an email, and realized a few days later, he hadn't responded. Puzzled, I probed several friends at the University - I was sadly informed that he had been hospitalized as a result of brain cancer. Within several months of first being diagnosed, he was taken from us all –

and I, along with his family, and this University suffered a great loss. Ironically, this Graduating Class of 2010 was not presented that same gift I had been, however, perhaps each of you can find your “Dr. Prince” in your lives or become a “Dr. Prince” to someone else.

In the time after his passing, I began to better appreciate that in order to be successful in life, whether business, school, just working with others, or generally in life, **relationships** (coupled hard work with integrity and luck) are what make us all successful – not one particular widget or financial transaction that you may develop or complete. Today, I’m in business with my wife, which is wonderful, I can only say that our business is honestly where it is today, on an amazing upward, successful trajectory, as a result of not only our personal and business relationship, but also because of the many people who have helped us along the way.

The second story I’d like to share with you focuses upon what I call “**adaptability to change.**” Before I go too far with you, I’d like to remind everyone of some changes which have occurred in our world since I was a student here at ESU.

First, there’s the obvious,

- In 1980, when I first entered ESU, IBM hired two gentlemen to create an operating system for a new PC. We know it today as DOS, and the company Microsoft. Today, Paul Allen and Bill Gates, two of the most financially successful men in the world, have arguably made the single largest impact on our daily lives. Just think, without computers and technology being standardized, some of the impact:

- The medical field may not have developed the cure for many diseases,
- The financial markets have become intensely more competitive
- Space exploration would be nearly impossible,
- Smart phones with texting, video chatting, geo-location services, buying/listening to music on iTunes and iPods, would not be part of our culture today..... and the list continues.
- General communication with one another would be much more disjointed.

From a United States Government Intelligence perspective, the Federal Intelligence Community has a different problem – keeping up with this ever evolving, fast-paced, telecommunications market. In many ways, they would have a much easier job collecting, transforming, and disseminating the incredible data mountains which are developed. To put it into perspective, today, in a simple, 8-hour day, one of PROTEUS' IC clients collects the equivalent of over 20,000 4-drawer file cabinets, of all types of multimedia, which has to be distilled, analyzed, reported upon, re-analyzed by some of our most

senior Government leadership, home and abroad to ultimately determine if there are actionable events upon which our Military and/or others need to execute. Imagine a world, where no such technology problems existed, but then again, imagine the alternative.

Continuing on,

- In 1981, the first Space Shuttle, Columbia made its inaugural Flight. In September 2010, we expect the last Shuttle flight of STS-51 Endeavor. Human space flight, while I personally don't think is gone forever, will take a backseat to commercial or robotic space flight.
- In January 1984, during Super Bowl XVIII, the Macintosh Computer was introduced in the infamous, "Hammer-thrower commercial"... Today, Apple has transformed itself to be one of the greatest computer and multimedia companies in history. The Company posted a 2010 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter revenues of over 13.5 billion selling nearly 3M Macintosh computers, almost 9M iPhones, and 11M iPods.
- Later in 1984, Rich Skrenta, developed the 1<sup>st</sup> known computer virus, known as the Elk. Today, Cyber Security is one our Nation's largest threats to our critical infrastructure, including: energy, military, and financial markets. Our Nation today has a budget of over \$300B to secure our nation from such threats.

- When I was completing my education at ESU, Social Networking took place at Rudy's Tavern and the Log Cabin! Today, Facebook, mySpace, LinkedIn, Flickr, eHarmony.com, YouTube, and many others have sprung up all over the internet. To help place perspective,
  - Reaching 50 million users – took
    - Radio took 38 years
    - TV 13 years
    - Internet 4 years
    - iPod 3 years
    - Facebook added 10 million users in 9 months.
  - Today, 1-6 marriages occur as a result of on-line dating...

Social media isn't a fad, it's a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.
- And my favorite, In 1983, the Baltimore Orioles were crowned World Series Champions – Today, many of us in the Baltimore area just hopeful for a "Win" sometime this season!

My point in raising these historical events is that the world is constantly changing... it occurred long before any of us here today, and it will continue to occur long after we've all passed. Graduating Class – as you continue in your careers or embark upon your new career, embrace change, don't resist it. Too often we have a propensity to resist change, because it's foreign, or 'not developed here', or some other artificial reason to not engage with changing activities. This will be stifling to any organization, a business, technology, your career, and the many generations which will follow you.

So, I challenge each of you - How will the world be changed when it's your turn to be standing where I am today, and addressing the Class of 2036 – and what will you have done to assist in that change?

Relationships and Adaptability to Change... They're two very powerful concepts which will fuel your tomorrow, if you allow them. Thank you very much and Congratulations – you deserve the best, because you got the best by learning here at ESU.