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What Does It Mean to Be a Buckeye?

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It's humbling to stand before so many of you today—in an arena that has housed great events from Pavarotti to Blink 182. Standing at the center of this stage is as close as I'll ever get to knowing how Jim O'Brien must feel when the basketball Buckeyes take the court. I'm always blown away by the spirit that fills this space—the shouting, the cheering, the emotion that the fans exude, all in the name of a Buckeye victory. In fact, let's take a little pop quiz (as a professor I can do this, and you don't have your diplomas yet). How do you respond when I say O H?

Oh...see parents, your kids did learn something during all of those social outings. Now, we'll come back to that spirit in a few minutes.

Today marks celebration and new beginnings for all of you, but as with all beginnings, you take with you the lessons and experiences from your past. That is one of our roles at Ohio State, to give you the foundation you need to become successful, contributing members of society. Each of you will leave here today with different degrees, but all of you also leave as Buckeyes. And as such, I want to focus on a topic of utmost

importance and profound significance... "What does it mean ... to be a Buckeye?"

For one thing, it means that you have graduated from a university that now has a coach that can beat Michigan.

Graduating as a Buckeye means that you have the preparation and foundation that will allow you to go on and become world-class in whatever you decide to become. From Linguistics to Logistics, Ohio State is among the best in the world. It means you will be following in the giant steps of Roy Lichtenstein, the world-renowned contemporary artist whose Pop-art paintings and sculptures sell for many millions and grace the walls of some of the finest museums in the world, as well as greets you in Port Columbus.

In the Berlin Olympics, the world took notice of Ohio State's legendary track star named—Jesse Owens.

And in science and medicine, Ohio State graduates excel in many areas. Robert Lawrence is recognized as the nation's first African-American Astronaut, and where did he graduate? Ohio State, with a Ph.D in Chemistry in 1965.

The first black female doctor in the U.S. Army was Clotilde Bowen. Where did she graduate? Ohio State, with her undergraduate in 1943 and her M.D. in 1947, and she received the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star for her work in treating our troops in Vietnam.

If you've ever used Windex, you may be interested to know it was invented by Harry Drackett. Where did he graduate? Ohio State, with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1907. He also developed Drano, Vanish, and Endust at the Drackett Company.

Buckeyes sometimes become Nobel Laureates such as Paul Flory, with three degrees from Ohio State, who formulated the hydrodynamic constant called Theta.

One of the most noted researchers in blood vessel work is Judah Folkman, Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. Where did he graduate? Ohio State in 1953. Also at Harvard is Ted Levitt, Harvard's famous marketing professor who wrote the most reprinted article ever to appear in the *Harvard Business Review*, "Marketing Myopia." Professor Levitt received his Ph.D. at—Ohio State. We like to send some of our

best students to such institutions to raise the standards at those schools!

Being a Buckeye means you have been educated by some of the world's leading professors in medicine, the sciences, business, law, pharmacy and most every other area. It means that you are part of an institution that lets students meet and learn from people like former Astronaut and Senator John Glenn and Congressman-turned Fox News commentator John Kasich, not to mention the many Buckeyes that have become CEOs of companies like Limited Brands, United Airlines, Sherwin Williams, and the Longaberger Company.

Being a Buckeye also means a tradition of greatness in sports...from the legendary Archie Griffin, Clark Kellogg, and Jack Nicklaus to Kenny Johnson, Katie Smith, and Stephanie Hightower. What makes these Buckeyes great is what they've accomplished outside of their athletic careers. No one illustrates that any better than Stephanie Hightower whose career on the track is only exceeded by what she has done since graduation leading in education and community activities to make this a better world. That is what it truly means to be a Buckeye.

In addition to getting a great foundation to be the best at whatever it is you want to be, being a Buckeye also means knowing that learning is a lifelong process. I hate to break it to you all, but do you know when your degrees become obsolete? The minute you parade them out of this arena. We've given you the foundation, but you've got to keep learning—keep reading books, take additional classes, get involved in professional associations. While your formal education may end today, your learning process is in full bloom, and if you want to progress in life and in your career, don't expect that to end any time soon. You can also continue your education in the increasing number of distance learning courses offered by Ohio State, as we truly become a university without borders.

Being a Buckeye also means you belong to this big, really cool club of other people who've graduated from this great place. It means that wherever you go, around the world, you'll likely see an Ohio State ball cap or T-shirt walking by. It means that there will likely be a group of Buckeyes living in whatever city or remote corner of the earth you choose to inhabit

one day. It means you share a common bond with a vast group of people...with other Buckeyes.

As I've watched 64,000 students pass through my classes and talked to alumni all over the world, I've often asked myself, what is it that makes us Buckeyes? What are the common characteristics and values that unite us in the scarlet and gray?

I believe it comes down to values—Buckeye values, if you will. Your values will be an important determinant of your success in your career, your family and your happiness. Remember, it is your attitude, more than your aptitude that determines your altitude.

The great thing at Ohio State is that not everyone has the same values, but there does exist a core of shared beliefs that reflect the unique history and composition of Ohio State. Many of these Buckeye values have developed from the great diversity of backgrounds that characterize Ohio State students. And while Ohio State is a prestigious, world-class university, we are not a homogeneous group of people all with similar and privileged backgrounds, the situation you find in many other

prestigious universities. We are an eclectic collection of rural and urban people, both rich and poor, from every ethnic background and nearly every nation of the world.

One of the most important values that makes us Buckeyes is that we are inclusionary, not exclusionary. We produce world-class scholars and world-class graduates without being world-class snobs.

At Ohio State, we frequently have students who are the first in their family to graduate from college. Seeing them achieve that distinction is one of the greatest rewards I know. There are probably some of you in the audience today. Teaching students that come from suburban families fortunate enough to attend excellent high school and college prep programs has its own rewards—they often push me and challenge my thinking. But even more satisfying and even more exhilarating, is to teach the sons and daughters of former Youngstown steel workers and former Akron tire workers who know that an excellent education is the key to a better future.

Students who work hard to get into college and work even harder to do well in college, reflect

values that demonstrate responsibility, entrepreneurial creativity, and innovation. Knowing how to change your own situation is the best preparation for knowing how to change the world. To be a Buckeye means, I believe, that students and their parents understand the importance of creating the future, instead of waiting for it.

At Ohio State, you'll find students from wealthy and poor backgrounds. Some of you could have gone to any university but decided to come to Ohio State because you wanted the best education in your field. And some of you came here because it was the best financial option for you. Being a Buckeye means you have received a Tiffany-quality education at a Wal Mart price.

Buckeyes also exhibit balance. How many of you worked at least part time while you attended Ohio State? That's part of our Buckeye culture...It's a positive, not a negative. It will help prepare you for implementing some of the things you've learned in school—and it has probably taught you the value of a dollar, hasn't it? When you work, and study, and participate in campus activities, you have to be

a juggler. Those of you who have learned to keep a lot of balls in the air and do well in all, are well prepared for success in your career. Hopefully, you learned that you don't get paid more until you do more than you get paid for.

Buckeyes also tend to be doers—not just thinkers. "Doing" is a big part of Ohio State's history. Ohio State was founded as a land grant institution with a primary purpose of providing extension services to agriculture. Today, we do that not only in agriculture, but in diverse areas ranging from medical and legal clinics to literacy programs and service and continuing education to the technical and business community. Our newest example is the Center for Entrepreneurship in the Fisher College of Business, where Ohio State students are working with area business leaders to create real businesses that will provide real jobs for the future of Ohio. Thomas Edison once said that an idea is something that won't work unless you *do*. That's what programs like the Center for Entrepreneurship are focused on—doing—and in this instance, taking ideas from mind to market.

One such doer embodies all of the Buckeye values I've mentioned so far. He was born in Russia in the early 1900s, came to study at Ohio State, and went on to become a U.S. citizen...as well as a Buckeye. He lived in a boarding house near Lane and Neil Avenue and worked hard to pay for his education. Combining the education he received at Ohio State with his own keen intellect and work ethic, he became one of the world's great industrialists. Today, we have six buildings built where he lived as a student. His name, of course, is Max Fisher for whom the Fisher College of Business is named. More important than the money he gave our university is the example he still provides, at age 94, when he visits our campus and engages our students with an intellect that rivals any scholar on this campus and a set of values that should inspire every student to do something great.

Buckeyes are also known to get a little rowdy sometimes— to rally around their team, their colors, and show a little Buckeye Pride. They sometimes like to go to Ann Arbor wearing Buckeye Nut heads and paint themselves scarlet and gray and scream Ohio Stale

cheers in the faces of those blue and yellow slackers up north.

But hopefully we never let our Buckeye pride become arrogance. Because arrogance can be a dangerous thing. Last year, the *Wall Street Journal* ranked the Fisher College of Business as the 14th best business school in the world, ahead of such venerable institutions as Wharton and Stanford. How can we beat them in the rankings? Easy—you've got to ask the right people. This poll was conducted among recruiters, the people who do the hiring...the people that are out there evaluating which students will make the best employees and leaders in the real world and not just on paper. One reason Stanford students didn't fare as well as Ohio State students, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, is because recruiters thought they were arrogant.

I've had students out there competing for positions with Harvard and Yale graduates. I've seen them compete for promotions and accounts. And I can't tell you how proud I am when our kids kick those Ivy-league butts!!

Surprised? It happens more than you might think? Why? Because we don't have the Ivy

League arrogance—we don't think that we're automatically better than everyone else. It makes us a little hungrier, a little more humble, and frankly a lot more fun to be around.

I hope that being a Buckeye means that we are proud of Ohio State, but never to the point of arrogance. Arrogance closes our minds to other ideas and other people and when we close our minds, we stop learning and growing.

Buckeye values were founded 'down on the farm.' Our history is in agriculture, where farmers know that what they have at the end of the day depends on how hard they have worked. They know that they have to plow and harvest, in good weather and in bad, whether they feel like going to work that day or not. In fact a lot of our students even today grow up on farms and in small towns, where people greet you or smile at you when you walk down the street. Look deeply into the value system of Buckeyes and you'll find a lot of the practicality, reliability, honesty, and frugality that are typical of Ohio small towns and farms. How many of you are graduates today in an agriculture or food service major?

Congratulations. You are part of the number one industry of Ohio.

Buckeyes are success oriented. But success means different things to different people. And though each of you has your own definition, I remind my students that it is not just about how much money you make, how many promotions you get, and how many awards you receive. Success is about happiness, contribution, growth, and balance.

-Happiness in terms of nurturing positive personal and family relationships.

-Contribution in terms of what you give of yourself to your job and to your community through volunteer work.

-Growth in terms of continual learning, expanding your horizons and talents, and finding new sources of friendship, support, and love.

-And balance between your personal, professional, and spiritual lives. We live in a society where many people say, "do what you want; do whatever pleases you, whatever makes you happy." But I hope that you learned more than that at Ohio State. Buckeyes still believe in the importance of doing 'the right thing.' Sometimes that means making sacrifices in the

short term for the good of the long term. This value creates graduates who live life in pursuit of long-term goals rather than short-term activities; graduates who try to get life 'right.'

So, this begs the question...how do you know when you've gotten life 'right?' I believe it is when doing what you define as 'the right thing' and doing 'what you want' are the same thing. Your definitions of 'what you want' and 'the right thing' will probably change over the years, but adjusting your life to make these two things the same thing is what success and life balance is all about.

And, to use that phrase most welcomed in any speech, *finally*, what does it mean to be a Buckeye? It means that you graduated from a university with a famous cheer. When I say the first part, how do you respond? OH

And you do owe. Remember that when your

While your formal education may end today, your learning process is in full bloom, and if you want to progress in life and in your career, don't expect that to end any time soon.

Alumni dues arrive for renewal next year.

Who do you owe?

Yes, you do owe the university. For those of you receiving an undergraduate degree today, you have received what statistics indicate will give you one million dollars more of lifetime income than those with a high school diploma. And for those of you receiving graduate and professional degrees, the multiple is two to three times that.

I didn't graduate from Ohio State, although my wife got her undergraduate and MBA degrees from Ohio State. I became a Buckeye by osmosis, through employer-employee loyalty. But trust me, when Ohio State plays Northwestern (my alma mater), my loyalties are unwavering! I'm a Buckeye through and through, although I have to admit that the outcome of an Ohio State-Northwestern football game is rarely in doubt. But Ohio State has been

great to me and to my family, and that is something I feel as a faculty member I need to reward. I would like to challenge the faculty here today to consider what we owe to this amazing university. We are not just faculty; we are Buckeyes! Woody Hayes said it best. We can never really pay back, but we *can* pay forward.

So who else do you owe?

First, you owe your parents. And if you have not thanked them already today, don't let the sun go down without doing that. And for those of you that have spouses, you owe them for their emotional and financial support as well. These are debts that are nearly impossible to pay back.

Second, I believe you owe your Creator or Spiritual Authority, for the belief that it is more important to do right than to do wrong, and for the strength to do right.

And most important, you owe yourself. You've worked so hard to get here ...each of you with personal stories of hard times, fun times, and triumph. Ohio State has given you a knowledge base and prepared you to live life to its fullest. You owe it to yourself to set your sights high, work hard, and succeed.

Life is about the journey, not the destination. Today is a great day of reflection and celebration, but it is just one day in the divine journey we call life. Thank you for allowing me to be a small blip in that journey by speaking with you today.

What does it mean to be a Buckeye? It means you are now prepared to go out and do something great, for yourself, and for Ohio State.

Go Bucks!!!