Christopher D. Burner ’80, Head of School
Commencement
The Chapel Lawn

I would like to welcome family and friends to the 2017 graduation ceremony of Western Reserve Academy, as well as alumni, our graduation speaker, Jude Kearney ’76, Trustees, faculty, current Western Reserve Academy students and, of course, the senior class. Today we gather to honor, celebrate and graduate the senior class at Western Reserve Academy.

Recently we have developed a series of opportunities for students, we call Beyond Reserve – these opportunities include science research, engineering, travel, living abroad, opera, building and other enriching opportunities. Our goal is to allow you to grow through hands-on experiences, try activities beyond classes to consider for college and perhaps even a career. We have also created the Compass Program for individual research; projects have included: short film production, custom longboard production, writing a children’s book about diversity, building a swing that generates electricity, creating a sensor for cyclists and runners to warn for vehicles approaching from behind, and creating a star room. These experiences involve deeper learning than a classroom experience and can transform the trajectory of a student’s education. Many of you have participated in Beyond Reserve activities.

Now, you all truly move Beyond Reserve. It is our sincere hope and belief that we have prepared you for your next step and created a curiosity, and sparked passions to continue to learn and grow after, and beyond Reserve, in college and throughout a career and life. Increasingly, education and learning requires travel, direct experiences with projects and cooperation with others. We hope we have created such an education for you.

This senior class sits in an unusual point in the history of this school. You have heard and watched as we have prepared for many changes. Most notably, a new curriculum, schedule and even new classroom – and yet you will not experience them. You will not experience classes in the pods, which you probably do not mind missing. But, as one of you commented to me about the curriculum, you explained, “I am just sorry I cannot take the new classes.” I assure you, the classes we offered while you were a senior were also enriching and exciting.

As I consider these changes, I am reminded what I read from another Head of School – he explained, “I want every senior class to graduate with the belief that the school offered everything they hoped for and needed; then I want to make all the necessary changes for the next senior class to prepare them for the future each year.”

I believe we have met your hopes and needs for your education at Reserve. I can assure you, we have enjoyed having you as students and have been enriched by our activities with you.

I would also like to address the parents and families today. This is also a graduation for you. Some of the parents are also graduates of Western Reserve Academy and there are also several families that have multiple generations of graduates. I would like to thank all parents and families for their commitment to Western Reserve Academy.
Your commitment and support has allowed this senior class to achieve so much, and now graduate. For each senior preparing for graduation, remember, there is a team that has supported you throughout your journey at Reserve: parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and certainly an advisor on the faculty, various faculty and staff members, coaches and other leaders among the faculty.

I am also sure you have developed mentors who will have an impact on you for many years. I would like each student to consider, at this time, the team that has supported you, guided you and allowed you to graduate from Western Reserve Academy. You may not understand their significance now, but I can assure you, as you grow and mature you will look back on the significant help and support they provided for you at Western Reserve Academy.

And now we turn to the graduation ceremony.

Class of 2017 – thank you and congratulations!