

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

05/27/2018, 10:30 a.m. EST

I would like to welcome family and friends to the 2018 graduation ceremony of Western Reserve Academy, as well as alumni, our graduation speaker, Matthew Wilson, 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.

Throughout the year I have discussed change and evolution at Reserve. Today, symbolically, we sit next to Seymour Hall, soon to reopen, honoring a century of tradition but evolving to meet the new and future needs of Western Reserve Academy. As graduates of Western Reserve Academy, you also are evolving, but Reserve will always be part of you. Now we turn to you, the senior class, to acknowledge your accomplishments, recognize your growth at Reserve, and celebrate your graduation and next steps.

While we grant awards and recognition, I would like to express my pride in each and every one of you seated before me. You have accomplished a great deal here and you have enriched this community. I look forward to learning about your future development and growth in college and beyond.

This class's achievements are evident through impressive Compass projects, singing and acting in plays and musicals, leadership and performance in athletics and even among your cohesion and class spirit. But on a much more personal level and not as evident, you have grown with characteristics such as time management, study skills, ability to collaborate and academic curiosity. These are skills and characteristics that will carry each of you through the next level of your education at college and beyond and, hopefully, lead to academic curiosity and lifelong learning. I can assure you, your learning and education will continue well beyond the formalities of classes and degrees.

I would also like to address the parents and families today. This is also a graduation for you. As usual, we have parents who are also graduates of Western Reserve Academy and we have several families that have multiple generations of graduates. I would like to thank all the 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, I urge you to 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, other faculty and staff members, coaches and of course your classmates. Perhaps you have found, and I would suggest you will definitely learn as you move into college and beyond, the support of a mentor or mentors is vital as you learn, grow and assume more responsibility. 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 depart from Western Reserve Academy you will understand the support and guidance they provided you.

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You will also need them as you face new and even more complex challenges throughout your education, career and personal relationships.

[Commencement ceremony]

Would you please join me in congratulating the Western Reserve Academy Class of 2018?

Finally, I would like to congratulate the most recent graduates of Western Reserve Academy. As I consider graduations and recent comments, I am struck how often the message to the graduates is about the need to be equipped to deal with change. I also would suggest the best way to prepare for an environment of change is to have a broad range of experiences, talents and abilities. Clearly this class, in my view, is well-equipped for college and the future, which many involve change.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, I would like to express how much we have enjoyed working with all of you while you attended Western Reserve Academy.

Collectively, we pass our best wishes on to you for continued success and happiness in college and beyond. We also look forward to seeing you back on campus for future alumni events.

As I conclude, I turn to a quotation given to me by Mr. Namiotka from Cicero's *De Officiis*, Book I, for a comment that explains, what I consider, a significant part of your education at Western Reserve Academy and your graduation:

Cicero explains:

“We ought, therefore, to keep all these things in mind when we inquire into what is proper; but most especially we must decide who and what sort of people we wish to be and what kind of life we wish to lead; which consideration is the most difficult of all. For it is in going through adolescence that there is the greatest weakness of judgment, and it is at that time that each person decides for himself or herself that kind of life which he or she will live, based upon what they have fallen in love with the most greatly. And so, one is entangled in a certain kind and course of life sooner than one was able to judge what was the best.”

Cicero has explained, so well, a comment that I have made to you before. Stated differently and more simply, I believe you establish habits, a direction and passions at this stage of your growth that will remain with you and guide you for the rest of your life.

I am honored that Western Reserve Academy, your classmates, faculty and staff have been part of that development, and in the process, you have enriched us as well.

With this, I conclude the 2018 Western Reserve Academy graduation ceremony.