

## **1 Hey Folks, Wow, Stuy 2013**

## **2 Last year Telly Leung said he was the safety school of graduation speakers.**

I guess I'm the triple threat - Teacher, Alum, Parent

## **3 The parent in me writing the speech**

I got the e invite about a month ago. The Stuy parent part of me said "get started - why aren't you done yet, did you make the speech?" You've got one shot you can't superscore this.

## **4 The alum in me writing the speech**

On the alum side was more 'meh - it's not due for a month. I mean, you think it's hard getting things done as a second term senior - try it when you're a 58th term senior

## **5 I think the teacher in my kindof agreed with the alum**

So, When I finally got started last night I asked a lot of people for help

## **6 What to talk about**

What to talk about

### **6.1 From a parent's point of view**

From the parent point of view - I should tell you how proud we are of you. Not because you've graduated and not because of the accolades you've received, but rather for who you've grown into.

There's no reason to be proud of accolades and awards - the pride is in who you are and how you live your life. The awards are when other people notice that.

So as parent's we're proud, but don't forget what all of us have done for you - the prodding and cajoling might not always be appreciated but it's

always done out of love. And I can think of no greater influence on a child than how a parent leads their own lives.

So, let's just take a minute and thank all the parents for EVERYTHING they've done to help get you all here.

## **6.2 From a teacher's point of view**

We've tried to give you knowledge, opportunities and perhaps a bit of wisdom.

Many times you guys don't know the lengths some of your teachers go to and I'm not talking about the popular teachers or the hip teachers

### **6.2.1 Richie Rothenberg and Ben Story**

You've all seen the artwork on the 4th floor. That's a memorial to Richie Rothenberg. Math chair from back in my day. Richie was a great teacher, but a quiet, reserved one

Back then, Ben was waitlisted at Columbia - his first choice. Turns out that behind the scenes, Richie mad a call and a couple of days later, Ben was in. Richie never made a fuss about stuff like that and never asked for thanks. That's just what he did.

Years later, Richie went to bat again for a kid that got into some trouble while in college.

That's what the best ones do.

So let's also thank those teachers. Give it up.

## **6.3 From the alum point of view -**

I discovered we're all the same

### **6.3.1 Jon Simantov story**

I also spoke to alums an I realized that no matter what the year, there's something that binds us all together. We had a CS dinner a few years ago. Of of the guys there, Jon, was from 97, the rest were from later years.

I asked Jon why he came knowing none of his classmates would be there. He said "It's a Stuy CS alumni event - I knew there would be coole like-minded people here."

So I realized that there are things that bind all of us and lessons we've all observered wether we're Stuy '97, Stuy '84, or Stuy '2013.

## 7 Jim and Matt advice

Trust yourself

You're sincere - it'll be good

## 8 So, let's talk about lessons that cut through the years at Stuy.

So, after talking to everyone, I figured that we should look at some lessons learned from time at Stuy.

## 9 Balance

How about balance -

OK - maybe we didn't learn so much about it, but we should have.

### 9.1 Grades, Sleep, Social Life

A little over four years ago someone told you "good grades, sleep, a social life - you can have two out of three."

Not true - You can have all three and moving forward, you should - at least to the extent it matters and that's an important thing to learn

#### 9.1.1 Sleep – I know, that's what classes are for.

OK, seriously, think back to junior year – the walk of the zombies - not good. I know, I know, you made up for it this semester.

If you're not rested and healthy, everything else suffers. Enough said on that.

#### 9.1.2 Now for the big one - Grades.

we all know the score - Stuy is a pressure cooker, all the competition.

Back in '84 there was one kid that made 1 mistake on the SAT. He went around for the next two months with one of those big dictionaries.

Next time he got a perfect score.

I never felt it – maybe that's why Ben ended up as Google CIO and I, well, you know. . . .

But what do grades really mean? Are grades knowledge? are grades learning? are grades thinking? and does any of this matter.

### 9.1.3 Grades != success

Word on the street is that grades are the ticket to a top name college but we've all seen plenty of head scratchers when it comes to acceptance.

Even if you do win the college acceptance lottery - how much does it matter

I've seen hundreds of people graduate from Stuy and just about all of them were happy with their colleges in hindsight and everyone that wanted a good education got one and pretty much everyone enjoyed their 4 years.

### 9.1.4 College and education is what you make of it - Goldman

Back when I was at Goldman Sachs we had people from all over. MIT, Stanford, Harvard etc. The best people - 1 from Columbia, 2 from NYU (including me), and 2 from Brooklyn College.

It's not about the name of the school, it's about what you do when you're there.

Sure - School rep makes a difference - if you're not good it'll open a door - we had lots of people with Ivy league and name brand edat Goldman but once there, it was up to you to produce. More important that your school's names or your grades is what you could do.

Ben spoke about Google and grades. Sure, GPA might be a base level gatekeeper, what you do is more important. To quote Mark Twain "Never let schooling interfere with your education."

### 9.1.5 Batya story

Batya and I would sometimes talk about this: Me: how're you doing B: pretty good M: happy with your grades B: I guess M: could you do better (grade wise) B: Probably M: Would it be worth the effort? B: no M: OK - all's good

## 10 Balance.

So don't stress about your grades.

Don't let grade fear keep you from trying hard and different things. Challenging ourselves is how we learn and how we develop and ultimately that's what leads us to accomplishing great things.

## **11 Take different interesting classes**

Take the hard class, the interesting class, the things out of your comfort zone. If you're a techie study some poetry - if you're an artist, learn to code.

## **12 Learn to look at the world from multiple perspectives.**

After 9/11 I was catching up with one of the Stuy family - Bruce. He was checking in since he knew we were near ground zero. Bruce was working for the blackstone group on the enron re-org. He was the lone junior guy on a team of brilliant senior businesspeople - all with degrees from top business schools.

The were going to be there for months figuring out debt obligations. But Bruce looked at the problem with the eyes of a computer scientist. He wrote some code and a few days later, problem solved. A few weeks later he was written up in Wall Street Week as the next Wall Street Wiz Kid.

Bruce saw the world from multiple perspectives and he was able to do that by studying all sorts of different things.

Learn to look at the world from multiple perspectives - we'll come back to that.

## **13 Besides, after Stuy - college should be a cakewalk**

Here - 8 classes a day + homework every night College 5 classes a week each meeting 2 or three times. Plus - no long commute.

## **14 Social Life**

Since we're not going to stress about grades, we can now look at the third part of the trifecta - Social Life - woo hoo party

In life, this might be as or more important than grades both here and over the next four or so years. This is where you'll build your network for life. your go to guys, your team, your friends.

This will be the foundation for the rest of your life.

You heard from Ben earlier - one of my oldest, dearest friends. We actually met at Wagner but were in the same homeroom in Stuy (woo hoo

7M). We've got great memories and great stories but he's also one of the few people in this world, if I'm really in a bind, I'd be comfortable going to.

### 14.1 Side note

side note something I learned way back and still try to do today – hang out with people smarter than you - that's a good way to challenge yourself and to learn stuff.

That's also where I met Devorah -

### 14.2 Lateness story

When I was a young teacher I was yelling at my class because they were late. I couldn't say I was never late since I lived in Manhattan so I told them my wife, who commuted by bus and train from Bayside was never late - there jaws dropped – YOU MARRIED A STUDENT???

No - she was also with me and Ben in 7M – she was the Geek equivalent of a crack dealer – she sold comics to the class.

lesson from that - context is everything

Anyway, long story short - I ended up marrying a wonderful, intelligent, beautiful wife which led to two kids and actually me talking to you today.

The moral of the story – specifically for all you Stuy guys – look at me - prototypical computer geek - this means there's hope for you - yes you to can find the perfect partner.

So social life is important, but it's also important combined with another Stuy lesson:

## 15 Diversity

To the Outside world – Stuy's a school full of a bunch of elitist entitled rich kids.

Ok, - nowadays - Stuy's a school full of a bunch of elitist entitled rich Asian kids.

Yea, the media really loves us.

Truth is I can't think if a more diverse place than Stuy.

Math and Science? Got it covered. Top math team, science awards, intel success, etc.

But not everyone's a math rock star.

I remember one of you guys coming into my class after a BC calc test "I forgot how to math." Apparently "Forgot how to English" as well.

But you didn't forget how to English – every year you guys win tons of English awards as well.

But it's the outside stuff that's more impressive – you guys write your own plays, compose your own music.

Did I mention senior sing - woo hoo?

### 15.1 Klezmer Story

Where else but Stuy can you find three guys – 2 Asian and a Caucasian teaching themselves Klezmer. A flute, a guitar, and I think a clarinet - three people studying Jewish folk music – Diversity.

You go to any lunch table and you'll find the jock next to the math kid next to the computer geek next to the artist.

## 16 Diversity

You're going off to college – after time you'll surround yourself with like people - people in your major, on your team, in your frat.

Seek out the diversity you enjoyed here – find smart people who look at the world differently,

## 17 Do stuff

Finally, since you're not stressing about grades and your getting enough sleep, and your spending social time with a diverse group of friends, do something cool.

It doesn't matter what.

Act in a play, or better produce one. Write an app, start a side business or volunteer group or join an existing one. If you're going to school outside of NY, learn all about where your community. If you're in NY, do the same.

When I was at NYU, I spent lots of time in Jazz and Blues clubs and travelled all over the city. My roommate and I even went down to see a sniper once. Probably not a great plan, but you get the idea.

Last year, two of the guys at MIT, Blake and Will, started MITCrush - it's gotten traction and since then I've introduced them to venture capitalists.

Up at CMU a couple of years ago Amy was looking for a Hacker Community - she didn't find one so she created Scotty Labs – today she's in England having an audience with the queen.

As you move on - find your thing and do the same.

## 18 Concluding notes

As you move through your next four years, you'll really come to appreciate how special these past four have been.

Take what you've learned here and use it to grow over your next four.

I've watched Stuy grads take the journey you're about to embark on for the past twenty years.

Don't just be a passenger on that journey but be the driver. Enjoy the ride and set the course.

Thank you for giving me these few minutes and making this graduation one of the highlights of my career.

We all look forward to seeing where your ambitions and abilities take you.

Congratulations