

**Gloria Cordes Larson Remarks
Bentley Convocation
September 1, 2009**

Welcome, welcome, welcome to Bentley! This is my first chance as President to welcome a Freshmen class - - the Class of 2013 - - to what is now officially Bentley *University*. So let me say it a little bit more “formally”: Welcome to Bentley University! I’m so thrilled to see all of you here - - parents and other family members included. This is one of my favorite occasions. Convocation is such an important day for all of you - - marking your first day as college students. And as you will soon learn firsthand, the next four years are going to be as fulfilling and fun as *you* decide to make them. It’s all up to you.

Of course you’re off to a terrific start because you chose Bentley! The Bentley community is exactly that - - a real *community* of students, scholars, administrators, alumni and others, all with tremendous pride in Bentley’s reputation as a leading business school. We’re a very tight knit group that cares about all our members, but *especially* our students. I’m so proud to serve as your President and I know you are proud too to join us as members of the *Class of 2013*.

And *you should* be proud -- a Bentley degree arms you with a passport to the world, while encouraging you to make a critical difference in whatever path you choose. Of course, the rewards of a Bentley education increase exponentially if you take advantage of everything the school has to offer along the way. So I’m going to challenge you to do exactly that, starting today.

And why wouldn't you? Bentley offers you the best of two education worlds: the classic New England college experience with the resources and prominence of a nationally ranked business university. We have a highly personal and supportive environment with an amazing faculty, who are both knowledgeable and highly accessible - - making this the perfect place for you to build on your many past successes, academic and otherwise. Over the next four years you will grow in ways you never thought of, growing into the successful and responsible world citizens we are confident you will become. Nothing excites me more.

A big part of what distinguishes Bentley from so many other colleges and universities is, of course, our strong and unique academic agenda - - one that offers depth, breadth and fabulous choices. Continuously refining business education and practice, Bentley connects leading edge research and classroom theory to fast changing marketplace realities and makes experiential education - - the excitement of learning by doing - - a key part of our curriculum. Whether through our innovative General Business Core, our exciting, first of its kind combined accounting and finance curriculum - - thanks to a generous grant from Ernst and Young and already the envy of business educators everywhere - - or our state-of-the-art, hands on business labs, you will learn all the business and analytical skills you need, including the very latest uses of information technology.

While you're gaining business knowledge, you'll get an equally rigorous education in liberal arts, one that encourages critical thinking, creativity and the understanding of different perspectives. Just started a few years ago, our Liberal

Studies Major - - we call it the LSM - - has been a huge success, with more than 650 undergraduates choosing to double major in business and a self-designed liberal arts major that lets you concentrate on a related theme that really interests you - - a theme like Media Arts and Society, Global Perspectives, Ethics and Social Responsibility or Earth, Environment and Global Sustainability.

And at the same time, you'll find world commerce and culture, ethics and corporate social responsibility literally woven throughout our curriculum. To this end, some of you have signed up for our brand new Complex Problems Creative Solutions pilot program. You're going to be very glad that you did. This is a novel approach to our core curriculum, letting you explore a huge global environmental problem through the lens of some of your required business and liberal arts courses.

Coming from a law, public service, and corporate governance background, Bentley's focus on ethics, values and the larger world means a great deal to me. Added to your other professional and liberal arts studies, these topics couldn't be timelier in the wake of the global financial crisis, occasioned at least in part by so many ethical lapses and so much greed. Your Bentley education will provide you with a moral compass, a sense of accountability and deep cross-cultural awareness, giving you a jump start on the leadership skills that you will need in what has so quickly become an all the more challenging world.

Taken together, Bentley will give you a truly unique combination of capabilities - - the very skill sets that major organizations, large and small,

corporate and not for profit, will be calling for in what we all hope will soon be the *aftermath* of unprecedented US and global economic woes. Indeed, as General Electric CEO Jeff Immelt noted in a letter to shareholders last March, this global financial debacle is clearly not part of a regular business cycle; instead, Immelt says this represents a genuine economic “reset” for us all - - a significant “reset” in which the world will necessarily need to be more sustainable economically, environmentally and socially than before. Earning a Bentley degree will mean having the very latest professional knowledge, understanding of technology, critical, creative and conceptual abilities, and broad world perspective - - as well as that essential “moral compass” - - that will help set you apart in a “reset” world.

Now let me restate the Bentley “bottom line” in a way that I think your *parents* will especially appreciate: your well-rounded Bentley University education will make you hot prospects now as student interns and later as graduates for employers everywhere. No wonder Bentley continues to have such a remarkable job and grad school placement rate in what has been an extraordinarily tough marketplace - - a placement rate boosted considerably by our top notch Center for Career Services, just ranked 12th in the country this summer for “Best Career/Job Placement Services” by the Princeton Review.

These next four years are the time to make things happen in your life. You won’t get a chance to repeat them - - at least your parents and I sure hope not! So don’t sit back and wait for things to happen. Take advantage of everything that Bentley has to offer you. We want you to make these four years count - - to

make them the richest, fullest and most rewarding time of your lives. As a group, you've already compiled an amazing list of accomplishments and leadership activities. So now that you're here, promise me that you'll grab for an even higher brass ring. Here are a few ideas:

- Throw yourself into your classes – all of your classes – business *and* arts and sciences. It could lead your life in a whole new direction.
- Take advantage of the amazing technology all around you; use the learning labs; seriously consider doing the Liberal Studies Major; do a minor in something you've always thought about.
- Join at least one club or extracurricular group -- and if you don't find the one you're looking for, start it. Many students before you have done just that.
- Play a sport at any level that works for you and become a fan of at least one of our teams – how could you not, given the Falcons winning records.
- Complete at least one “real world” internship; consider doing several. They often lead to permanent jobs and will give you a leg up with employers everywhere.
- Consider studying abroad – and immerse yourself in our global, highly diverse community right here on campus.
- Explore the arts and culture at Bentley, as well as in our historic, culturally rich New England region.
- Meet as many people as you possibly can. The friendships and contacts you make at Bentley will last a lifetime.

And promise me something else - - that you'll find time for community service while you're here. Participating in Bentley's award winning service learning program, for example, may earn you course credits, will make a difference for others and will certainly add more meaning to your own life. In a NY Times column earlier this year, Thomas Friedman wrote that 2008 may well be the year that the world "hit the wall." He wrote that "When we look back, 2008 will be a momentous year in human history. Our children and grandchildren will ask us 'What was it like? What were you doing when it started to fall apart?...What did *you* do to change the status quo?'" To this end, writing in an op-ed piece for TIME magazine a few weeks later, President Obama asked all of us to do our part "by hitching our wagon to something bigger than ourselves." He went on to say "I'm not going to tell you what your role should be. That's for you to decide."

Well, I won't tell you what your role should be either, but promise me that while you are at Bentley, you will find time to hitch *your* wagon to something bigger than yourself. I know I can count on you because you are a generation that's been widely praised for being one of the most socially conscious in history. You so-called "Millenials" give me tremendous hope when it comes to changing the status quo, as Thomas Friedman urges, both for the US and the world beyond.

Currently twelve hundred Bentley students work in some 70 community service projects in our home town of Waltham and as far away as the orphanage and school that we sponsor in Ghana. As a result, increasing numbers of our

students are using their business degrees for public service and work in non-profits, while those headed for the corporate world are also making social responsibility and volunteer work essential parts of their careers and lives. Recently Bentley became the first university in the country to partner with the groundbreaking national youth service organization CityYear. We've put \$1 million over the next five years in scholarships for Bentley students to spend a year helping students in inner city schools throughout the US as City Year Corps members. Our first three Bentley National Service scholars are headed for schools in Miami, Los Angeles and Louisiana this fall, all honoring the spirit of volunteerism embodied in the Senator Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act signed into law by the President this spring, as well as Bentley's own longtime commitment to community service.

Smart, skilled, creative, tech savvy, highly ethical and civic minded team players, thousands of Bentley students just like all of you have gone on to highly successful careers that routinely demonstrate the personal rewards that come from doing well while also doing good. I heard this summer from one of those former students, a graduate of the Bentley Class of 2006. Preston Gitlin wanted to tell me firsthand how critical his Bentley education, both inside and outside the classroom, has been in such a short time to his success as a real estate developer and good neighbor in Costa Rica. Originally from Rochester, NY, Preston visited San Ramon, Costa Rica his senior year as part of a spring break trip to help build homes for Habitat for Humanity. He was there just two days when he decided it was where he wanted to move after graduation, telling early investors in his startup development company that he "wasn't going to do business" if he

“couldn’t give back to the community.” Four successful residential projects and many thousands of dollars in donations later to build a local school and help meet other pressing local needs, Preston says that his dream of becoming successful *and* helping the community has already come true and that he will always be involved in community service, regardless of what comes next for him.

This is just one example among many of a recent Bentley grad applying the high level professional skills and strong community service ethic he learned here to succeed in business and in life. Preston’s living up to his fullest potential in the richest, fullest and most rewarding way possible, hitching his wagon to something bigger than himself. That’s exactly what we want for all of you. We want you to start right now with your new college life at Bentley.

Before we leave though, I need to share one more especially important piece of advice. While I can’t wait to hand you your diplomas in May 2013, a few of you may not make it. I hate to say it but it is an unfortunate reality on all college campuses. Even here students sometimes can’t handle the responsibilities and personal freedom they’ve been given and behave in ways that aren’t acceptable to the Bentley community. But here’s what I believe: if we expect the best from each of you, that is exactly what we will get. Please don’t disappoint me or your parents, but most of all, don’t disappoint yourself.

You will all face challenging situations and you will all need to make smart decisions, to rely on your own core values and to stick to your guns under peer pressure. Make no mistake about it: as we’ve *all* learned from recent world

events, personal integrity and the ability to discern what is right from wrong will be required of you wherever you go in life. Now is the time to learn who you are and what you stand for.

Of course, you are not alone in this. We are here to support you in every way we can. Promise me that you'll reach out for help if you need it. We are all here for each other.

I can't tell you how happy I am to share this important day with every one of you. We want to provide each of you with the opportunities you need to realize your future potential, to discover for yourself the right role for you. We want to do everything we can to help enrich your lives, believing you will use what you learn at Bentley to ultimately enrich the lives of others too. We have such high hopes for all of you.

So let me say it one more time: Welcome to Bentley University!