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### **Final words to the AUR Graduating Class of 2006**

President Robert A. Marino

May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Congratulations, congratulations!

Before I wish you a final *arrivederci*, I would like to take a moment to reflect on your last four years here, which have also been my *first four years* here, three as your provost and one as acting president. Also, I want to make you a solemn promise.

First and foremost, thank you for sharing these years with me. I know that you lived them fully, that they have been years of growth as well as years of bonding to friends, to this unique city, to this unique institution. Together, we have seen this university grow and develop. We've met challenges along the way and emerged stronger from each one successfully overcome.

*We have shared a lot over these past four years! Allow me to mention some highlights:*

- We had the good fortune to welcome and work with a great man, the late President Robert Evans, who planted the seeds for much of our recent development. Newly named Evans Hall honors his memory for all of us at AUR.
- Two months ago, our Board of Trustees approved our new Strategic Plan, which is meant to be the blueprint for our growth and development over the coming 10 years. It is an ambitious plan, but I have no doubt that the university community will rise to the challenge and implement it with measurable success. Our first goal is, and our first priority will always be, to continue to enhance academic excellence and our academic reputation.
- With the hard work of dedicated faculty and staff, the support and guidance of trustees, the encouragement of friends, alumni and parents, we have substantially enhanced measures of academic achievement and student satisfaction.
- We show so much promise and potential, that we have been able to attract important donors who have granted and pledged substantial gifts to us to advance our academic programs. I particularly wish to thank trustee Laurence Auriana, whose gift of nearly three-quarters of a million dollars I am pleased to make public today. Thank you, Larry, for your trust in our ability to continue to create a high quality institution.
- Our name and fame has also spread in the Roman community: many international businesses, non-profit organizations and media outlets seek out

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you -our students- for internships. This past academic year the internship opportunities outnumbered the students eligible to take them. We did well but we will not rest on our laurels.

- We have seen our faculty develop and increase in numbers and assume the responsibility for the curricula you have followed.
- We have created an AUR Senate charged with academic issues, where your student representatives have voice and vote
- We have substantially increased scholarships and work study
- We have seen our faculty institutionalize an excellent quality control infrastructure for student learning. Good teaching and small classes have been AUR's strong points long before you or I ever came here, but our faculty has found new ways to improve further. We are not afraid to be held accountable to parents, students, indeed outside reviewers, that our students are high achievers. And that our faculty's teaching efforts achieve tangible and significant results.
- As regards the physical premises of the university, you have seen those expanded and renovated, maintained and beautified, to make the school more hospitable and welcoming, especially to you. I know right now you're all asking "what about the stairs in Building B?"...they will soon go, and I invite you all to come back to visit and see the rest of the planned remodeling.

Now both you and I are entering a phase of transition, of crossing over. My own transition is into a position of greater responsibility as the new President. But my past four years here inform and support my unbridled faith in the potential of AUR. I have pledged to work towards making it ever better as an American institution of learning in the heart of Europe, renowned for its excellence and for preparing its graduates to be a cut above the rest.

Today we are celebrating *your* achievements and *your* superior preparation. I have been particularly gratified to see how many of you have participated in volunteer work for a good cause, and how so many of you have worked for the benefit of your fellow students in extracurricular activities, including Student Government, the innovative Business Club, and for the extraordinarily successful Communications Week. Finally, I cannot possibly bring this academic year to a close without mentioning the incredible success of the sports team that stole our hearts: the AUR WOLVES, the new soccer phenomenon in Rome.

For all of these reasons and more, *I am so very, very proud of this graduating class.*

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In just a few minutes, you will join your family and friends for pictures and for well deserved celebrations. Your undergraduate days are now behind you. But the bonds of friendship you have forged here at AUR will last your whole lifetime. We will always be your *alma mater*. We take this as a sacred responsibility, to welcome you here always, to listen to you, and...to write to you...faithfully! We will never cancel your AUR email address. We will let you know how we are doing so you can rejoice in our future successes as we rejoice in yours.

Thank you and ... ARRIVEDERCI !