I want to thank you all for inviting me to be here today, and for allowing me the honor of participating in such a wonderful ceremony. It truly is special to be given this recognition.

I'm not really going to stand here and pretend that I possess the secret answers to a good life and career. Nope. I don't have answers. So, I'm going to spend the next hour and a half giving you 84 reasons why student loan interest rates should be tied to treasury bonds. Who's ready?

Seriously, instead of answers, I thought it would be cool to share with you my top three mistakes since I left Heartland Community College. This is in hopes you won't make the same mistakes...and instead learn from the error in my ways!

The first mistake I made - trying too hard to be better than others. I wasted so much time trying to be a perfectionist. Trying to impress everyone, or compete with them. Don't focus on being perfect compared to others. Focus on being the best you, and believe in you.

I actually learned how to believe in myself at Heartland, but somewhere along the way I lost it.

Let me take you back when I arrived here. You see, I'm a moron. And that's ok. I know there might be other morons here today.

came to Heartland is because I couldn't quite get my act together. I washed out from the big University down the street. At that time, my greatest academic achievement at that University was determining which alcoholic beverage went best with my 8 am math class.

I'm also a moron when it comes to math. When people start using lots of numbers...all I hear is clicking sounds in my head.

But here's the thing. Even though I knew I was struggling, I always believed in myself. And Heartland was the perfect place for me to reboot and become Jay 2.0.

I know that's probably the story for some of you in this audience- who were just stubborn enough to keep going despite the fact that you were failing and others doubted you. If you are sitting here feeling proud because you kept going despite the fact you were failing, don't let go of that belief. You will be so much better prepared than the perfectionists who don't know how to cope with momentary failure.

If only those people could laugh at themselves. And that leads me to my second mistake.
My number two mistake is taking myself way too seriously. I thought for a long time that I was way too important. After all, I was given the ultimate responsibility of delivering the news to people, and if I failed, then our world will spiral into darkness and Al Qaeda wins.

No matter where you go after today, don’t take yourself too seriously. The only person I want taking things seriously is the surgeon who’s removing my spleen or something. By all means, be serious about that! It’s a good rule of thumb. If you see a spleen...you should always be serious.

A few years ago, I found myself in a very big meeting in Washington, DC...a few blocks from the White House...with very important people who do very important things. And they were asking my opinion on important issues. There’s no way I could feel important next to these people. That’s when I thought to myself...what would these people do if they knew that I own Darth Vader pajamas? (I'm actually wearing them under this gown) Darth Vader was my moment of truth.

Life goes like this: Birthday-birthday-birthday....bam, you're old! It's so quick. Every once in a while, take a step back and enjoy it. Watch the sunset. Go for a bike ride. Finally find out what would happen if you got all the tollhouse dough together and made one, big gigantic cookie.

Now that would be something to write home about.

Speaking of writing...that leads me to my last mistake. My last big mistake was not knowing my own poetry. I know that sounds like something Oprah would say, but let me explain.

For years and years, I thought I doing what I was supposed to. You go to college, get a job, buy a Ford Taurus, go to Branson for vacation...and that's adulthood. But several years ago, I was at a point where I didn't know why I was doing what I was doing, and what the point of any of it was. It led me to a lot of soul-searching and eventually made me change careers.

When I was here as a student, I took a poetry class. I wish I could remember the professor's name...I guess I never thought I'd be talking about this class 15 years later in front of you.

For our final project...he assigned us to explain to him what our poetry was. This was not a writing assignment...I didn't have to sit around and think of words that rhymed with Nantucket. He wanted us to turn in something that explained what made us who we are...what we are passionate about.

At that time, music was my poetry. I played the drums in a loud rock band. Still do. So, I turned in a video of me playing drums.

But since then, my poetry has changed. I have the most wonderful wife, Carrie...who is the kindest person I've ever met. And I have these two beautiful children, Vivi and Eliot...who are 2 and 1. That's right, I have a two year old and a one year old at home. And I've learned one thing so far: Never negotiate with terrorists. And I have two great parents- my mom and step-dad. I wouldn't be standing here without them.

My poetry is my family. They are the reason I get up at 6 in the morning and drive to work through 4 inches of snow. Or why I give time and money to the Children's Hospital, where both of my kids started their lives in need of special help. Or why I leave work a few minutes early every now and then.
It's even why I was excited to be here today...because I get the chance to talk about how beautiful and great my wife Carrie is, and how I'm the luckiest person on this planet to be married to her! I get to say that in front of hundreds of people!

So, my advice to you is to always know your poetry - and know that your poetry will change...and that's cool, because we are built to keep learning new things about ourselves.

When I started, I said I wasn't going to give you any answers so instead, I want to leave you with a few questions.

Do you feel you did your best to get here? Are you enjoying this celebration? And, Do you know why you've sacrificed so much to earn the right to sit here today?

I hope so, because it means you are the best YOU can be, you're not taking yourself too seriously, and it means you know YOUR poetry.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Congratulations to all of you, and a very heartfelt thank you for having me here.