The Blugold Experience

A Commencement Reflection Speech by Cara Shimon, December 2011 BBA Candidate
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Commencement, December 17, 2011

I know we are all still a little bit sleepy, but I’m going to ask you graduating seniors a few questions...have any of you been hearing things like...have you found a job yet? Your major is...what? Or more like...You ain’t movin back to my couch!

Well, it’s crazy for me to realize that it took until the end of October to “figure my life out” as we call it. But as I look back, it wasn’t just my senior year, or the last 3 months that have gotten me ready to make this big leap into the next chapter of my life, it’s been the last four and a half years here at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Coming in as a typical freshman, wide eyed and scared to death, (yet I didn’t show it to anybody)...I would have never dreamed of the opportunities that were about to come true.

Sophomore year—same thing. Went to class, worked...still completely unaware and oblivious to the unknown greatness that lies in our amazing professors, the many student services, and the on-campus activities like the artist forum series, Varsity Night live, and the Viennese Ball.

My junior year I was fortunate enough to be able to study abroad in South Korea. Here at Eau Claire, it’s pretty common, it’s not “did you study abroad”...it’s more like where. 33% of students at EC study abroad, but only 1% in the entire country. Graduating seniors, if you have studied abroad at some point in your college career, would you please stand. This is the magic I’m talking about, an experience of a lifetime that has gotten us ready for the “real world”. Whether it be trying new foods like kimchi, going on adventures like white water rafting, or simply just meeting new friends from around the world. You and I both know it’s now not a matter of where we have gone, but it’s where we have yet to go.

And if you weren’t a scared freshman, or a study abroad student, more than likely you have participated in one of our 250 student organizations. I was lucky enough to be a member of nine of those throughout my years here at Eau Claire.

One of those being a Greek social sorority on campus, Alpha Xi Delta. Few students on our campus have the ability to call themselves “Greek”, but it’s a title that I have come to cherish. It’s the unexplainable bonds of sisterhood, the academic support, and the giving back that has helped shape who I am today.

All of our on-campus organizations have done wonders for our character building, as well as our leadership and networking skills. My advisor of APICS, an operations management organization, Terry Wells, has not only been my professor, but also a coach, and a friend. It’s these relationships made here at Eau Claire that make us unique, the friendships that will continue to grow and guide us in our future careers.
So what I’ve realized now through my four and a half years at one of the most highly accredited and respected universities in all of Wisconsin, is that....I still don’t know everything. I don’t know what else is possible, what other undiscovered opportunities are still out there to achieve. I didn’t as a freshman, and I sure don’t as a super senior. Who knows what our graduating class will accomplish...maybe an Olympic gold medal? Maybe a biology major that cures cancer, or very likely a first grade teacher who teaches your children all they know. Whatever happens, we know we made it this far, and we’re not stopping here.

But one thing that I do know is that we Blugolds....we have an advantage....we have “The Blugold Experience”. Remember all that you have received, inside and outside of the classroom. And use those tools to help you succeed for years to come.

I wish you luck in all your future endeavors, wherever that may lead you. But always remember where your true roots lie. From California to New York, Alaska to Florida, or maybe even Japan to Australia, Eau Claire will always be your home away from home. Don’t forget to return for a homecoming or two, because we all know that it’s the best celebration this world has ever seen.

So thank you to my family, and all the other families and friends for joining us here today and please help me in congratulating my fellow classmates, Class of 2011.