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Speaker of the House Delivers Commencement Address

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi urged University of San Francisco graduates during a May 19 commencement to know their power, to follow their passion, and to be unwilling to accept the current state of the world.

Across the globe, Pelosi said, young people are engaged in their own international dialogue even as some world leaders question the value of constructive talks with adversaries. On campuses worldwide and through e-mail, instant messaging, and blogs, young people are talking about their hopes for a brighter future and their desires for peace and prosperity. She said they are weary of war, and are using words rather than violence to express themselves.

"The university is where words reign," Pelosi told undergraduates of the McLaren College of Business. "The college campus is permanently the place where argument, debate, research, and articulate speech are and should be prized and maintained. The University of San Francisco has given you these tools to understand the world, to clarify your values, and to enter into dialogue with others so you can help promote better understanding for freedom and peace."

Pelosi spoke in conjunction with the awarding of a posthumous honorary degree to her longtime friend and mentor Leo T. McCarthy. McCarthy '55 was a three-term California lieutenant governor and the founder of USF's McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good.

McCarthy's honorary degree citation states, "Throughout his political career, Leo T. McCarthy was a champion of social and economic justice, and he pursued an agenda to educate children; protect the environment; and safeguard the rights and healthcare of the aged and the infirmed, farm workers, nursing home residents, and minorities."

During the first part of her speech, Pelosi highlighted McCarthy's accomplishments, including his role in inspiring Congress' current commitment to keep America competitive in the global economy. Pelosi said McCarthy understood that innovation begins in the classroom. The business world the graduates will be entering, she said, is a result of McCarthy's tireless work to shape the future.



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi urged graduates May 19 to be unwilling to accept the current state of the world.

"We know that America's world leadership will be secured by those who operate on the frontier of knowledge and discovery," Pelosi said. "From the beginning of our nation, that frontier has been aggressively expanded by young people who are not wedded to old ways of thinking, or daunted by the encumbrances of the past or the present."

Pelosi also touched on the history of the university and how today's current students fit in. A brave group of Jesuit priests came to San Francisco to found the city's first institution of higher learning, envisioning it as a place for students to study the past, question the future, and build a brighter future, Pelosi said.

"Today, those pioneers would see in the class of 2007 that their mission has succeeded," she said.

Pelosi, who had USF President Stephen A. Privett, S.J. deliver the invocation at her swearing-in, ended her speech by mentioning the bond she feels with the university's class of 2007 because of her role as commencement speaker.

"Because of that special bond, each of you has a friend in the Speaker's office," Pelosi said.

A total of 1,744 undergraduate and graduate students were invited to participate in the May 18-19 commencement ceremonies. ■

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