

2008 Commencement Address by David Elkouri, L'78

Graduates of the Class of 2008, Dean Agrawal, Members of the Faculty, Friends and Family, it is truly an honor to say a few words on behalf of the Board of Governors of the Law School. It was 30 years ago that I stood in your shoes, excited about finally achieving the goal of graduation and anxious about what lies ahead: the bar exam and the real world as a practicing attorney. And what a year 2008 has been at the University of Kansas; an Orange Bowl victory in football, a National Championship in basketball, and all of you graduating from law school. In honor of 2008 and all these wonderful events I have come up with 8 thoughts for you to consider as you leave here today.

1. **This is “only the beginning”.** While your formal education in the law may be ending, your real education is only beginning. The thing about the law is you never quit learning and you are a perpetual student. Instead of taking tests you are graded by the courts, clients and your peers. Every day is a new learning experience and this is one of the things that makes practicing law challenging and fulfilling.
2. **You have become experts in “delaying gratification”, sacrificing currently for the hope of something better in the future.** Keep this attitude for a while longer. During the first years of your career, the harder you work and the more you study, the faster you will progress. Be concerned about how good a lawyer you are today but be more concerned about and take actions to ensure how good a lawyer you will be in 5 years.
3. **People actually pay you to give them advice and they believe what you tell them.** Do not be afraid to tell them you don't know the answer and will have to get back to them. In your haste to prove yourself worthy, it is sometimes tempting to cut corners. It is much better to be right than quick. Your reputation depends on it.
4. **We are in a very portable profession.** The practice of law should be intellectually fulfilling, financially rewarding and most important fun. It is highly unlikely that your first job will be your last. If you find that you really are not enjoying what you are doing and with whom you are working, do something else. Our profession prepares us for a wide variety of jobs and there will be one out there that meets the tests for you. Almost all lawyers change directions at several points in their careers.

5. **Money can't buy you love.** Many times the job that pays you the most will not be the most fulfilling. Making money is important, but don't take the highest paying job and sacrifice happiness.

6. **Maintain balance in your life.** The law can be a jealous mistress. Take time for family and friends. Lawyers are notoriously bad at this and many times personal lives end up in shambles. Many lawyers take themselves and their jobs too seriously. Stay humble and don't be afraid to laugh, even at yourself. There are very few people that, on their death bed, say, "I wish I had spent more time working."

7. **Be a "net giver."** Whether it is in your firm, the community in which you reside or the bar, be known as someone who gives more than you take. As Winston Churchill once stated, "we make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give".

8. **The best possible investment you can make is the one you just made in your education.** No matter what happens, no one can take away your diploma.

The degree you are about to receive may be one of the best bargains you ever get. KU Law grads are well prepared to compete in whatever area of the law profession you chose. You have been taught by outstanding teaching professors that have prepared you very well for the next steps in your education. In return for this, always do what you can to enhance the reputation of KU Law, by being an excellent attorney who always is the strongest advocate for your client, while constantly practicing with integrity, honor and humility. Always be loyal and grateful to your families, friends and professors, and in the future, extend that same loyalty and gratitude to your clients. Give back to the Law School with your time and money. I am convinced that under Dean Agrawal's leadership our school is ready to soar. And as the reputation of KU Law is enhanced, so is the value of that degree you are receiving today. So, protect and enhance your most important investment. I know you will all be outstanding alumni and I welcome you to our esteemed group.