



BRAD PFAFF

STATE SENATOR

Senator Pfaff Shares His Cherished Life Lesson with 2025 Graduates

I was honored to speak at Viterbo's Commencement Ceremony in early May. When thinking about what to share with this group of students, I reflected on my life journey and the people I've worked alongside, each with unique lived experiences, educational backgrounds, and perspectives. And, I believe, it is those differences that we should celebrate and lean into as we pursue our very own career paths and explore our life journey. With so many graduating seniors in the area, from high school to college, I'd like to congratulate them and share the remarks I made to Viterbo students, summarizing an important lesson that I've learned in life:

Graduating seniors, we celebrate not just your academic accomplishments, but also your character, curiosity, and life experiences that brought you here. I grew up on a dairy farm in the coulees and valleys of western Wisconsin. My mornings began before the sun, in the barn with my dad, listening to the farm report on the radio.

I heard about crop prices, milk futures, and global trade, and it widened my understanding of the world far beyond the rolling hills I called home. Farming was more than just work—it was knowledge, experience, and resilience. Years later, that deep understanding of agriculture is what landed me a job with U.S. Senator Herb Kohl. Senator Kohl, a man who built his career in the grocery business, knew how food was sold—but as a farm boy, I understood how it grew.

And that knowledge, rooted in my upbringing, my labor, my experiences, was valuable. It meant that even as a young farm kid, I had something to offer one of the most influential people in the U.S. Senate. Be proud of where you come from, and be proud of what you know. Everyone brings something unique to the table, and you never know when your own experiences will be exactly what the world needs.

A lesson I learned from my rural farm parents that still stays with me to this day: you do not know where you are going unless you know where you are from. As you step into the next phase of your journey, remember that life does not follow a straight line. Sadly, your career will not unfold according to a master plan. Instead, like the winding roads through the Driftless Region, it will twist and turn, presenting unexpected bridges and unseen curves.

You will face challenges. You will encounter detours. But your success will not be defined by a perfectly mapped path—it will be shaped by your temperament, judgment, hard work, and perseverance. I encourage you: resist cynicism. Play the long game, not just the short game. Stay curious, stay open-minded, and never underestimate the value of what you bring to the world.

Because it is your experiences, knowledge, and character—these attributes will take you further than you ever dreamed. So, congratulations on your accomplishment and on the start of an exciting new chapter in your life. I am confident that you have what it takes to be the next leaders of the Great State of Wisconsin!