

REMARKS FROM PETER GILLESPIE, PhD
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When I was casting around for what to say, I came across a recent copy of the *New Yorker* magazine. On the cover was a cartoon of a young man, hanging his PhD diploma on the wall, along with his high school trophies and childhood toys—it was his room he grew up in. In the background were two people, obviously his parents, wringing their hands. The unmistakable implication was that he'd gotten his PhD and wasn't employed, so he went home to live with his parents.

There were many ways to read this cartoon, but one was that a PhD was no guarantee of employment in this unsettled economy. It reminded me that this is a tough time to be a young person looking for a job. And it's not just the economy; some careers are tough, like academic science, with few faculty jobs and many in the pipeline. Now, I don't think many of the graduates here are planning to go and live at home. Can I see a show of hands? Anybody graduating going back to live with your parents? How about the parents? Are any of you terrified that your children might come back and live with you after all that education?

I bring up the tough environment for jobs not because I'm pessimistic for you, not at all. Indeed, I have much confidence that you'll do well in the future. I don't think that because I feel that our graduate programs do such a great job, making it easy for you. Not at all. In fact, I don't think that's our job. Our job is to erect obstacles for you to pass—challenges to be overcome. The learning is not in the information we transmit to you, but instead the learning that occurs when you dig down deep within yourself and find out you can do something—whether it's complete a tough course, pass an oral exam with flying colors, or spend endless hours in the lab doing experiments. Our programs don't endow you with any skills; you develop your skills, stimulated by the requirements of the program.



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And that's the point. I'm confident for the future of the graduates in this room not because we have such wonderful programs, but instead, because the graduates are so wonderfully skilled, driven, and creative. You've demonstrated that by getting this far. I think you'll overcome the challenges presented by a tough economy, or the challenges inherent to a field with few jobs.

If I had one piece of personal advice, it'd be this. Find something you love. Something that drives you on no matter what the adversities. Most of us in academic science are probably here because we love what we do—we love the discovery of incredibly fascinating jewels hidden with nature. Science values creativity, persistence, and even obsessiveness. For me, it's a perfect match. I don't mind the challenges of being a scientist in an academic environment—writing grants, serving on committees, administering graduate programs—because the science makes it all worthwhile. For you—just make sure that you find that match. It's worth everything in the world.



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