

From the editor...

BOY, DO I LOVE GETTING COLORFUL INVITATIONS IN THE mail! Makes me feel popular and special, unlike those considerably less colorful restraining orders I'm used to getting. Those are so cold and drab and so harshly worded.

What I found in my mail a few days ago, though, was much friendlier, and graced with snazzy ClipArt streamers. It informs me that I'm "cordially invited to start the initial phase of the graduation process."

Doubtlessly, my fellow seniors out there can relate to the giddy elation which overtook me upon receiving this news. According to this invitation, it's time to "prepare [myself] for graduation."

Wait a minute. Prepare myself? Isn't that what I've been doing all along? Is there going to be some sort of survival test out in the woods of southern Wisconsin? What sort of "preparations" should I be making—should they involve a compass and a knapsack amply loaded with granola and other such provisions?

Upon further reading, I learn what steps I will need to take in order to "prepare" myself, and since none of them involve investing in a good pair of Timberlands, I feel relatively sure that I won't be dropped off in any densely wooded region. Step one is to take the required courses for my chosen degree. This seems like it should go without saying, but I suppose it's best for them to cover everything.

Next I have to attend one mandatory graduation workshop. The purpose and contents of this workshop are a mystery to me, but it is necessary in order to apply for graduation. I applied for college, I applied for loans and now I have to apply to receive the degree. I have officially entered a world where red tape has replaced nitrogen as the single greatest component of the atmosphere.

The workshops will also last about an hour. An hour?! Graduation is still just walking across a stage, shaking someone's hand and getting a rolled-up piece of parchment isn't it? After pondering what could possibly consume this hour, I've determined that the workshop will most likely go something like this:

ADVISOR: "Hello, students. I'm here to guide you through the exciting commencement procedure which you will all go through very soon."

STUDENTS: (Blank stares.)

ADVISOR: "First, as you may have read, mortarboard technology has made leaps and bounds in the last decade. The first 20 minutes of this workshop will help you learn how to operate the radar guidance mechanism and GPS in the caps, as well as the small laser cannon, which you'll find useful for quickly and cleanly eliminating any small debris that may be in your path as you approach the stage."

STUDENTS: (Blank stares. In the back, someone cracks a Coke.)

ADVISOR: "No drinks allowed. Now, you may be wondering why such an intricate cap is necessary. Well, in order to reach the commencement stage, you will of course first have to negotiate the obstacle course."

CONFUSED STUDENT: "Obstacle course?"

ADVISOR: "The obstacle course will pit you against a series of physical challenges, each more insidious than the last, much like the final round of 'Double Dare.' If you make it through, you'll slide out the giant polyurethane nose filled with week-old pickle brine and onto the stage, where Father Minogue will hand you your degree. We will spend about half an hour practicing some of the trickier Physical Challenges."

EVEN MORE CONFUSED STUDENT: "What the hell?"

ADVISOR: "Oh, you're right, I forgot to mention. Before handing you your degree, Father Minogue will ask you three riddles. Only by answering all three correctly may you earn passage across the bridge."

STUDENT ON THE VERGE OF TEARS: "Bridge?"

ADVISOR: "Um, I mean, stage. So, let's practice some sample riddles. Does anyone here know the air velocity of an unladen swallow?"

Pomp and circumstance, indeed.

*Andy Daglas
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