

Good afternoon Graduates!

The other day, while my friends and I were playing charades, my friend Kristin picked up her clue and began frantically pointing at me. The clock wound down as we threw out our guesses, but none of us could come up with the answer. Disappointed, Kristin revealed the clue: it said “Nerd.”

If you hadn’t guessed already from the fact that I recently played charades with my friends, because I was “that girl” in your classes, or because I am standing up here in front of you, I am warning you now that I am, in fact, a nerd. Although I have never worn a pocket protector or played World-of-Warcraft, I *do* love science.

As a chemistry major, I have learned a lot more about atoms and molecules than most of you probably ever will. However, my understanding of chemistry is not confined to the classroom. I’m sure all of you have also been influenced by scientific principles. Allow me to explain how some of the basic chemical concepts are not as distant from your own lives as you may think:

The first concept is **Experimentation**: We have all participated in experiments. Take for instance, freshman year: for most of us, every experience that we had was entirely new. We lived away from our families. We met new peers and friends. We took classes in subjects we didn’t even know existed! But the experiments have not stopped since then. Indeed, whether trying out the newest Skinny Minnie at Coney or finally making it to the next DC destination on our list, we are continually experimenting.

After experiments, comes **Analysis**: A critical step to make an experiment useful is to interpret the results. We ask ourselves, did we like that new idea? Did we think our studying was effective? Were they laughing with us, or were they laughing at us? From choosing which classes to take, to contemplating the benefits of different career paths, and even to deciphering the meaning of the latest text from our new crush, we all use our analytical skills daily.

So what knowledge do we gain from our analyses?

We learn about our **Reactivity** with others. Sometimes we meet certain people and instantly want to be best friends forever. Other times, we meet certain people and decide we would be happier never seeing them again. Through our reactions with others, we learn about ourselves. For example, I now know that I only have stable reactions with those who appreciate bad jokes and poorly performed robot dances.

We learn the value of **Balance**. At CI, Stephen Joel Trachtenburg informed us that there are 168 hours in each week. These hours are occupied by classes, study sessions, community service events, chapter meetings, dinners, happy hours, parties, and, my personal favorite, sleep. As we analyze the value of each of our

activities, we realize that being happy and successful depends on a careful equilibrium of all the demands that collegiate life brings.

Finally, we learn about **Excitation**. Science has taught me that the reason why substances differ in physical properties, such as color, is because of differential interactions with the wavelengths of light. The same is true of our experiences: some of us felt blue about science, or humanities, or languages; others were tickled pink by those same subjects, inspired and motivated to look deeper, to ask new questions, or to simply continue moving along the path that we were already on. Though you all may not be green with envy over my love of charades, bad dancing, and chemistry, I'm sure each one of you has found something to be excited about here at George Washington.

As you move forward into the experiment of your future, never forget what you have learned from your past analyses.

Thank you, and Congratulations Class of 2010!