

Respectful and Honest Professionals

2014 STL Commencement

Jeffrey S. Lehman

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President Hai. Dean McConnaughay. Dean Yandle. Dear Faculty Colleagues. Distinguished guests.

Members of the Peking University School of Transnational Law Class of 2014:

I am so very proud of you. Four years of courageous work are over, and at last you are ready to move from the world of study into the world of action.

I first spoke to you as your dean almost four years ago, on August 23, 2010. On that day, I told you that you were here because you have enormous talent, and I told you that our mission at STL was to help you realize your potential. We were committed to helping you develop the intellectual qualities that are shared by the very best transnational lawyers, so that you would be prepared for lives of enormous contribution.

I told you that we would be giving you a professional education that you would find both demanding and thrilling. I urged you to commit yourselves fully to that education, so that you would be able to capture all the benefits of studying with such extraordinary professors, and all the benefits of studying together with such extraordinary classmates.

Now, today, you are here. You have done it. You have absorbed all that STL can give you, and now you are ready to go out and change the world.

As you enter into your new lives as STL alumni, I have one request to make, and one promise.

The request is that you commit yourselves, every single day, to strengthening the reputation that the first two classes of STL graduates have done such a wonderful job of building in China. That means committing yourselves to being known as respectful and honest professionals. Being respectful means being respectful of every person you interact with, and not only those who seem powerful or important – respecting their ideas, respecting their time, respecting their good names. Being honest means ensuring that your integrity can never be questioned, that you are famous for always doing the right thing, even in situations where you could have cheated and not suffered any punishment. Being a professional means making sure that your work is always the very best you can do. “Just good enough” is never good enough for an STL graduate.

My promise is this: If you are respectful and honest professionals in the way that I have described, then I promise you that twenty years from now you will be delighted with the contributions you have made, with the professional career that you have built.

Let me be clear. I am not promising that your career will follow a happy path that you can foresee today. Most likely in twenty years you will feel that you did not choose a path at all, and that somehow a path chose you. What I am saying is that whatever your path may turn out to be, you will be happy and proud to know inside that you walked down it as a respectful and honest professional.

And I am saying one more thing. Members of the Class of 2014, whatever paths you may end up following, please know that we will always be proud to have been your teachers. We will cheer for you when you are successful. We will commiserate with you when you have setbacks. And whenever your steps lead you back here to our campus, which we hope will be often, please know that we will always be happy to welcome you home.