

Thank you for the introduction.

Good evening, everyone.

Speaking to you today has made me appreciate how quickly time flies. It feels like just yesterday I was sitting in your seat excited about my future, but apparently it's been almost a decade so bear with me as I come to terms with that. Joking aside, it is an honor to be speaking to you today and I hope that something you hear will resonate with you and help you on your journey.

Whether this is your first degree or one of several, this is a significant step in your career so take a moment to celebrate. You deserve it. Some of you may have secured your first post-college job while others are on the hunt. Although each of you will have a different path just know that your journey is your own. As the saying goes, "Comparison is the thief of joy" so don't let your perception of another person's journey deter you from what is meant for you.

Through my journey, I'll speak to four key points that will prepare you for your career. Those are Be Curious, Engage Others, Speak Up, and Take Care of Yourself. For those of you who like acronyms, you may have noticed that it spells out B.E.S.T. (best) and I ask that you do your best in everything you do.

Being the first STEM major let alone engineer in my family, I realized that there was much I did not know. And as I continue to learn more, I realize there is still so much I do not know, which is normal. The world is changing and technology is evolving, but don't let it overwhelm you. Be curious. Be teachable. I know that curiosity can be scary sometimes especially if there's a chance of failure. My first role out of college was a 6-month rotation as a software engineer while my degrees are in electrical engineering. No I did not choose this role and yes I did only have one computer science class. Thank you COMPSCI 1250! Instead of giving up before I started, I built upon the foundation I had and created an environment where my team was comfortable giving me constructive feedback. While I didn't get everything perfect on the first try, I turned my failures into lessons that helped me far exceed the expectations for a new engineer and prepared me for future roles.

Besides being curious, I took time to establish and strengthen relationships with others. Although there is value in networking with people in positions you aspire to obtain, there's value in developing genuine connections with your peers and people in completely different fields. Through a mentoring program, I was assigned what I thought was an unconventional mentor. While I expected to be paired with another engineer, I had the pleasure of being paired with an HR professional who ended up being the most impactful mentor to my career so far. My mentor helped me find my next rotation that I ended up returning to after completing the rotation program because I loved it so much. She used her network to find a manager in an area I was interested in that was known for developing early career talent and I'm forever grateful to her. Mentoring programs are just one way to connect with others so find a way that works for you and forge those connections. As you forge those connections, please remember that they should be mutually beneficial.

With those connections, it's only right to speak up and share your aspirations as well as listen to their aspirations. If you're an introvert like me, at first it may be daunting to do so. But I challenge you to think of this saying when you have doubts. "Closed mouths don't get fed." That means that before someone can help you, you have to say what you need. You are your biggest advocate. For me, I share my aspiration to be a Chief Engineer with anyone who will listen. When I was on the radar team, I shared my aspirations with the team lead. At every opportunity, she'd pull me in to get more exposure to technical leadership since that's something I needed. She even recommended me for her position when she was moving to another team. Because I shared my aspirations with her, made a meaningful connection, and did my job well, she was able to advocate for me to become the radar lead. That opened the door for me to become an engineering manager. Speaking up isn't just for yourself, you should speak up for others too.

I don't know about you all, but sometimes I can get hyper focused on a task or goal and my career is no exception. Throughout my career there were times where I lacked balance between my work and personal life. To prevent this, I've taken steps to be more intentional about balance. For me that looks like spending quality time with my loved ones and doing home improvement projects like building my garage. For you, it may look

different, but I encourage you to find what brings you joy and make time for it. Your well-being is important so prioritize it. This goes beyond your physical and mental well-being. Take care of your financial well-being too. Leverage the benefits and resources your job provides to ensure you are your best self.

Now, in my examples, you may have noticed that each one involved multiple elements of B.E.S.T. That's because they are intertwined and require good communication skills. Being curious may involve engaging with others to get your questions answered while speaking up for yourself if you want an opportunity to explore an interest. Taking care of yourself may require you to vocalize what you need. You have the tools to succeed. It is up to you to leverage the foundation you established here and your soft skills to push you to where you want to be. I challenge you to practice B.E.S.T. as you embark on your career.

Again, congratulations on this milestone. I hope you have many more milestones to celebrate. Thank you.