

Evelyne Moore commencement address
University of Missouri St. Louis
May 14, 2022
Title: From “what” to “how”

[Greeting]

- Good evening friends, faculty, students, alumni
- And...of course...the brand new alumni of the University of Missouri - St. Louis.
- I am honored to be here today...sharing this moment with you.
- Let me lend my voice to the chorus of people saying, “Congratulations!”
- Enjoy this hard-earned moment.

[Introduction]

- As you just heard...my name is Evelyn Bailey Moore and I’m a 2003 graduate of the Joint Engineering Program.
- UMSL holds a special place in my heart.
- It’s where my mother and my father met when they were freshmen in 1972.
- So...I guess you could say...UMSL is a part of the fabric of my history.
- Nineteen years ago...I sat where you sit today...full of ambition.

- I wondered what I would accomplish in life that day...and I was a little scared of the unknown.
- *(Said with humor)* I also hoped the commencement address wouldn't be boring.
- And the bio you just heard feels like a time machine...bringing me to present day.
- That bio tells you what I've accomplished in 19 years of my career at Boeing...an aircraft manufacturer with nearly 15,000 employees in the St. Louis region.
- And while I'm proud of all you just heard, that bio doesn't reveal much about who I am.
- Life...learning...and I'd even argue innovation...doesn't take place in the "what"....or the list of things we accomplish...
- It all happens in the "how."
- *(Said deliberately)* The "how" is the journey. It's where we learn. And it's where we grow and mature. It is what leaves the imprint on your heart and establishes your legacy.

[Main body of the speech]

- Let's read back the "what" you just heard about me...but add in a little "how."
- **Moore holds Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from the University of Missouri-St. Louis/Washington University Joint Engineering Program.**

- Yes...that tells you what I did. But there's so much more to the story.
- Earning that degree...for me...meant overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds.
- While in college...I was a single mother with two part-time jobs trying to take care of my son and get an affordable education.
- I knew I wanted to be an engineer when I was 13 years old. But sometimes life can get a little complicated and things don't work out exactly as planned.
- I remember bringing my son to the library while I attended study groups...praying he would cooperate long enough for me to absorb what I needed to learn.
- I would promise him ice cream if he was a good boy.
- I thought about quitting school more times than I can count. I was completely and utterly exhausted....but I couldn't give up.
- A little someone was counting on me.
- The National Conference of State Legislators reports that only two percent of teen mothers finish college before age 40.
- My biggest challenge—motherhood—was also my biggest motivation.
- All I wanted was to pay for his college education one day so he didn't have to struggle like I did.
- I lived by the quote, "Without Struggle, There's No Progress".
- I had to fight for that engineering degree. The JEP program was not easy but it was the key to my future...it was also the key to his.

- You see...I knew that you could increase your earning potential exponentially when you have a college degree.
- When I look back at that time...I realize my degree means so much to me because of how I earned it and how hard I had to work to get it.
- I learned about the foundation of engineering...but I also learned just how strong and capable I was.
- I learned that a statistic means nothing when you're willing to work hard for something...or in my case...someone...you love.
- That is "how" I earned this degree.
- Let's bring this to current day.
- **Evelyn Moore is the director of engineering and chief engineer for the F/A-18E/F and EA-18G Programs for Bombers and Fighters in Boeing Defense, Space & Security.**
- (*Said with humor*) Ok, this "what" feels a little good.
- Boeing is one of the largest employers in the region and has 806 suppliers in Missouri and Illinois alone. We also build the best defense products.
- Being the director of engineering and the chief engineer for the largest fighter program in St. Louis is pretty amazing.
- But again...the meat of the story lives in "how" I got to where I am today...and what I learned along the way.
- Getting here wasn't a linear process...and I had mentors and advocates along the way that saw my work ethic first hand.

- I was given an opportunity because others had faith in me to lead a program that was far above my title and experience level.
- To give a little context, I went from managing a team of two...to a team of 100....then a team of 300....then a team of 800.
- Along the way, I gained additional knowledge on aircraft avionics hardware...electronic warfare systems...airframes and subsystems...
- to managing and executing large scale multi-billion dollar military development and production programs....
- But perhaps...most importantly...I learned about being an inspirational leader.
- Boeing also invested 100% in both of my Masters Degrees in Engineering Management and International Business.
- In addition to learning an array of functional skills...I learned that when given the option to sink or swim...
- I will swim every time... and if I do sink...I will jump back in and try again.
- I also learned that as you grow and learn...it is important to pay it forward and advocate for others.
- I became an advocate for women and minority engineers.
- I served as the executive sponsor for the National Society of Black Engineers and the Society of Women Engineers
- ...and I've personally mentored over 100 talented individuals.

- In the end...I learned to never limit myself or let others define who I am meant to be.
- That's how I got to where I am today.
- "How" you achieve the "what" is important.

[Boeing's digital transformation]

- I have worked at Boeing for 18 years.
- Boeing serves as another great example of what this shift in mindset can do.
- Boeing's first century was defined by "what" it built.
- But this next century will be defined by "how" we built it.
- We're focusing not just on building quality platforms, but also driving innovation and safety into how we build them.
- This shift has led us to a digital transformation.
- And we're now embracing digital design...model-based engineering...and open systems architecture.
- As a result...we're producing better...faster...safer end products in a better...faster...safer way.
- Boeing's digital journey began with deliberate investments in tools...training and processes in things like...

- Our T-7A Redhawk trainer...which is built in St. Louis and pays homage to the Tuskegee Airmen...went from a computer screen design...to first flight...in less than three years.
- And, the T-7A will be used to train every bomber and fighter pilot in the Air Force for decades to come.
- Our MQ-25 refueling drone...also built in St. Louis...has proven the technology to deliver autonomous digital weapons systems quickly exists...
- and having this capability will extend the combat range for fighter pilots.

- Our mission is to provide the most digitally advanced...simply and efficiently produced...and intelligently supported solutions to our customers.

- And we're making it happen by focusing on "how."

[Diversity, equity and inclusion note]

- This new focus has brought about innovation...but it's also helped us shift our culture.

- By looking at "how" we're getting the job done, we're ensuring employees feel safe, accepted and included at our company while doing the great work they do.

- We're actively recruiting diverse perspectives...because we know that peoples' unique backgrounds, experiences and opinions always bring about a better end result.

- And we want everyone to know they are welcome at Boeing.

- Work for a company that focusses on the how.
- (*Said with humor*) And this is where I'll make my shameless plug to come and join me at Boeing.
- (*Read like the side effects at the end of a commercial...quickly...in a funny tone*) Visit Boeing.com/Careers for more details.
- The "How" is important.

[Conclusion]

- 19 years ago...sitting in this exact auditorium...I wish I knew that even though the how isn't always easy...it's always worth it.
- How I did it...through hard work and by the grace of God...that's what makes me appreciate the journey.
- Remember that kid that I used to bring to the library...
- Well...he graduated from the University of Missouri system and is an Electrical Engineer working for a fortune 50 company. He is now working on his doctorate. He is part of my journey. This is what makes me proud.
- Go. Accomplish great things.
- But know the lessons you learn...the hard work you put in...the lives you touch...and the things you innovate...happen in the "how."
- You will struggle in the "how."

- Because that's life...but don't give up. You will learn more than you ever knew possible and your destination will be bigger than you could ever imagine when you learn from the journey.
- As one of my favorite quotes from Les Brown says...“Do what is easy and your life will be hard. Do what is hard and your life will become easy.”
- You have achieved the first step...earning your degree...but it's only the beginning.
- Remember to love others...invest wisely...and pay it forward along the path to greatness.
- Enjoy what you've accomplished...and think about what's next for you...but also spend some time reflecting on how you accomplished it.
- Because that's where growth happens.
- Thank you and congratulations on your degree. Now go be amazing.