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It's wonderful to see everyone here today. Thank you for having me. I'd like to extend my gratitude to Rector Stanisław Mazur and the academic community for the invitation to share some of my thoughts with the audience here who are representing the University of Economics in Krakow.

I'd like to start by telling you a little bit about me. Besides being the Consul General of the United States Consulate General in Krakow, I'm a proud Polish American. That's why it's a particular honor for me to address you all here today in the country of my grandparents' birth. And you may not know it, but October each year is celebrated in the United States as Polish American Heritage month.

We have lots of special months to celebrate in the government, but for obvious reasons, this one is very important to me. Therefore, the timing of this event couldn't be better!

I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at a time when most of the people I knew were Polish-Americans. There were more than 500,000 people of Polish descent living in Milwaukee when I was born, and given its proximity to Chicago, Milwaukee was another one of the centers of Polonia in the United States.

My grandparents—immigrants from Poland—were a big part of my life and the lives of my siblings, so of course Polish tradition, foods, religion and culture were also important. In addition, I had many aunts, uncles, and cousins, and our family often all got together at my grandparents' house. My father played in a Polka band, and he and my mother both played the accordion, and my father and his band would perform at the Polish bar my uncle owned in town.

My family was very active in the local Catholic Church—St. Roman's—which was also a social center for Polish-Americans in my neighborhood. In many ways, I had the stereotypical Polish-American life, and I would not have traded it for anything. Most people had blue-collar jobs and were in the middle class. My childhood in a Polish-American family and a town with many Polish-Americans shaped my life positively. My social circles, Church, Parish friends, and neighborhood friends mostly came from Polish roots as well.

We kept the holiday traditions of Poland alive—for example Wigilia and St. Nikolas Day on December 6th. My non-Polish friends always thought that it was unfair that the Polish kids had a visit from St. Nikolas in early December, and then we got another one from the American Santa Claus on December 24th. Easter was also an important holiday, and so were name days. Mine happens to be March 17th, so I shared that with all the Irish kids.

We also celebrated Polish Fest in August in Milwaukee, which was an opportunity for Polish-Americans to showcase Polish food, music, art, and crafts to the larger non-Polish community in our city.

I was introduced to my grandparents' many Polish-American organizations, groups that engaged in community and political issues on behalf of Polish-Americans in Milwaukee. Looking back, I was oblivious to the amount of work it takes to keep an ethnic community connected to the home country, especially in times of communism. I remember all of us getting Solidarność tee shirts and wearing them at school in support of our friends in relatives in Poland.

As a result of my early exposure to Polish culture, history, food, and traditions, I fulfilled my dream of studying in Poland soon after the iron curtain fell. I first taught English, and later taught Polish classes to American university students. My diplomatic career has included two postings to Poland: one in Warsaw 17 years ago, and now in Krakow as Consul General.

Overall, I have stayed connected to my Polish roots my entire life. I was pleasantly surprised to already have met some of my cousins who live in Poland for the first time before COVID. I plan to travel to my grandfather's village this month to learn more about my family and their history before they immigrated to the United States.

So you can see, Polish American Heritage Month is a celebration that fits right in with our assembly here today. The Polish people have shaped the fabric of the world--not just the United States--and will continue to do so. Since the first Polish immigrants came to my country in the early 1600s, they have been overachievers! And I have no doubt many of your professors will soon be saying the same thing about you.

Also, I think you should know that I'm no stranger to the struggles of university life--I've been a university administrator back in the USA, also an international student academic coordinator and a linguistics and Student Development faculty member.

As you can probably imagine, seeing others excel in academics is one of my favorite things; I've already devoted a good portion of my pre-State Department career to guiding students down paths to guarantee their success, no matter the hurdles in the way. I even earned my doctorate in the field of education back in 2002 and have worked as a teacher myself!

Of course, I also understand very well the flip side of this academic world, not just from the administrative or teaching perspective. I'm a lifelong student and even now studying Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology at Harvard remotely. Life's too short to not learn as much as you can and do as much as you can! This Ph.D.—which I'm slowly working on—will be my second doctoral degree. When I retire from my diplomatic career, I plan to continue research and teaching in I/O psychology. The famous behavioral psychologist Abraham Maslow taught us about self-actualization on the road to transcendence, and that road is paved with opportunity to learn, grow, and help others. Education, formal or informal, remains a critical part of my development as a person, and education also drives my motivation.

But as we all know too well, it's been a long time since any of us have been able to get together to do much of anything lately--to celebrate, to learn, to

work. It's a testament to your personal resilience and strength, as well as the more obvious academic talents you all possess, that you are here today, sharing a moment with your friends, family, professors and colleagues.

And that's what I'd like to talk a little about now--how despite challenges and unexpected bumps in the road, as we say in English (sometimes they are huge mountains instead of bumps!), we can achieve success--both individually, for example in your studies, in your jobs, in your personal relationships--and collectively. A group of inspired, creative, and brilliant minds are never stronger than when they are working together. And this work could be in a classroom or in a boardroom, it doesn't matter--but the way you approach life and its challenges is going to determine your futures, and ultimately, your success.

You're already well on the way, I can see. Just by being here, getting into a great university like this one. You've all proven you have the. brains to accomplish the goals you set for yourself. Now the next few years are going to be all about the drive--the will and the single-mindedness necessary to not just go forward and progress in your studies, but the commitment and dedication required to stay the course, no matter how hard that class may be, not matter how much time you don't have for homework, or whatever unforeseen obstacles life decides to throw at you to test you--to see if you'll give up or prevail.

So how can you make sure that you'll prevail? How can we prepare ourselves for the challenges that lie ahead, when we don't even know what they are? Well, there are some examples in all-too-recent history we can

look at--an obvious one is the recent pandemic, which has affected all of us. Some tragically, some less dramatically, but no one could avoid it.

So what happened? You might say: No one saw this one coming.

Well, that's true. Definitely no one saw it coming, not the way it did. But for years the best minds in the world--doctors and biochemists and virologists and epidemiologists--have known a global pandemic was a possibility. So they had done research on variations of similar viruses, they had studied vaccines. They had considered how to respond and trained themselves to react--rapidly. Effectively.

Now we're not going to get into how COVID unfolded, or how the vaccinations developed--that's not my point.
My point is challenges can be surprising--no one expects the unexpected--but you can prepare yourself mentally and psychologically to surmount them when they crop up in life.

But Patrick, I hear you asking me, how do I prepare? This is a degree I'm after, academic success. How can I anticipate all the bad things that could come my way?

Well, we already answered that last question--you can't. But you can ready yourself, nonetheless.

First of all, you can work on adaptability. Don't be rigid in your routines or requirements. Be flexible in your lifestyle, and don't see change as an enemy, but as a friend.

Secondly, be smart with your choices. Study! Read the assignments! Remember you aren't going to become an expert on anything through osmosis--you have to dedicate yourself--and that means putting in the time necessary--to actually learn what you are studying. Your teachers are here to help you, to support you and guide you to success.

Another important factor: train yourself to be resilient. Take responsibility for yourself. Don't look to others when success depends on you -- you are the boss here. No one is driving the car but you. You are the one who decides when to move forward, stand still, or even retreat.

And should you ever retreat? Tough question. The problem with all things in life, you won't always win, you won't always hit a grand slam home run at the bottom of the ninth. If anyone understands that metaphor, your English and knowledge of American culture is very impressive!

So, do you retreat?

No, not unless it's a regrouping, a strategic step back. That's ok. Then what you do instead? You may not like this one:

You learn to accept failure. Learn from it, and don't abandon your goals because of it. Use adversity as a teacher--one of the toughest there is--and

accept the wisdom it grants. There are at least a thousand examples of successful people whose achievements depended on failure. Being rejected by a publisher, or turned down at an audition, or not getting the job they applied to...

Our natural tendency as human beings is to feel failure keenly--maybe like a knife chipping away at our resilience and resolve. But instead of these various chips damaging you, wounding or eroding, what they are really doing is being excised--taken away. Let your failures act like a sculptor with a chisel--deliberately, sometimes painfully, removing all the extra pieces of marble or rock to carve the final result--the person you're going to be. When you're done, all that's left is a work of art.

But to survive this, you have to fight, you have to be motivated. Some say nothing worth doing is ever easy, or the harder the fight the sweeter the victory. Whether or not you agree with those sorts of cliche sentiments, the bottom line is motivation. Without the will to surmount, to continue, to persevere, you won't just fail.

You'll do something worse.

You'll give up.

And that's when you start to lose a lot more than an education. You lose your dreams. You lose yourself.

It may sound a bit dramatic, but this isn't an everyday occasion. You're here to launch your academic year--to pursue disciplines both complex and

critically important not just to you personally, but to the world around us. Economics ties us together, and on both the micro and macro levels, it requires smart people to keep our nations on the right track.

So, it's not just about you. It's about your school, your future. Companies and coworkers and yes, even governments. It's about Poland. It's about the United States and all nations everywhere. How's that for important? Did you know you had all this responsibility on your shoulders just by enrolling in the University?

So, are you willing to work? Are you motivated enough? Only you know the answer to that question. But I'm looking around this room, and I believe you are. You can look to the future, see who you wish to become, and make it happen if you persist, if you not only endure hardship, but grow as a result of it, allowing it--even welcoming it--for the manner in which it sculpts your strength and purpose.

And didn't I say it's not just about you? It's about community and the organizations we belong to...

As a student of I/O psychology, I spend a lot of time with faculty and classmates at two universities trying to figure out what motivates people and then what motivates them at work, away from work and in their careers. Studies show time and again that most people want autonomy and ownership in their careers and that autonomy supersedes salary amounts in terms of importance. Giving people ownership and more responsibly

requires trust. When employees feel trusted, the research shows they are also more motivated to do better and achieve more.

What is motivation, then? Motivation is the internal processes that give behavior its energy, direction, and persistence. Modern day motivation study is derived from the great thinkers Plato through Descartes, Darwin, and Freud. It's focused on will, instinct, and drive. These spawned nuanced areas of study such as 1) the active nature of a person, and 2) thoughts and cognitions, social impact, and contemporary thought. Today's study of motivation proceeded transitional years, in which incentive and arousal, as well as hedonism were emphasized.

Two major types of motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic. They continue to gain interest by psychologists, physicians, business leaders, and other social science professionals. In a nutshell, extrinsic motivation is behavior driven by external rewards, such as pay raises, promotions, benefits, bonuses, and prizes. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by internal or less tangible rewards such as enjoyment, purpose, growth, curiosity, passion, self-expression, self-development, and social interaction. The groundbreaking work of psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1970s led to self-determinism theory, which is a macro-theory of motivation that differentiates between autonomous and controlled types of motivation, and has informed changes in areas such as education, healthcare, work organizations, parenting, sport, and many others.

So, you might ask yourself, how does this apply to me? I am a student of economics—I will study my trends and numbers and everything will be

fine. I'll tell you that motivation and job-satisfaction are correlated by the research, and people are not farm animals that can be trained to perform menial tasks. As a result, extrinsic motivation—in the longer term—is generally not enough for people.

This is why the majority of research and attention is on intrinsic motivation. Let's do a little learning exercise so I can illustrate. Given many of you are aspiring economists, I'll use the example of $10. If I tell you that I will offer you a portion of that $10 with no conditions, except that we both have to agree on the amounts, would you accept such an arrangement? If one of us rejects the amounts, however, then both parties get nothing. Let's say I first give you $6, and I keep $4, would you take it? Show of hands? How about if I give you $5 and I keep $5? Show of hands? And if I give you $2 and I keep $8? And if I give you $1 and I keep $9?

So, if our extrinsic motivation is solely at play, one should always take the free money as it is greater than 0 each time. But since humans' other factors are at play—intrinsic motivators if you will—wealth maximization is not enough. Intrinsic factors such as fair play, revenge, frustration, competition, and other emotions all come to the table. Research shows that most people reject the $2 and $1 offers… But why? Because we are not robots or ATM machines—we feel and think.

I have already mentioned autonomy and ownership as leading variables that lead to job satisfaction, but when one starts applying for positions or starts a completely new career, one generally makes a list of pros and cons related to that position. We start a process of separating extrinsic and intrinsic

rewards, almost without thinking. Generally, we all jot down—quite quickly—words like “salaries,” “vacation time,” “promotion opportunities,” “paid travel,” “over-time,” “stock options,” “paid training” or “education,” and other forms of extrinsic motivation.

But what about intrinsic motivation? Do we make a list of less tangible things we want to achieve? Data shows that on average a person spends 90,000 hours of his or her life at work or working. So, with that type of time commitment, are there not intrinsic benefits that motivate us to stay at a job for as long as we do? I believe it is our job—and now your job—to recognize these intrinsic motivators and seek them.

I want to thank you so much for your attention today.
I hope some of this stays with you, especially when you confront those challenges we've been talking about. This is the beginning of a very special time in your lives--and beginnings can be scary. But this isn't a dangerous precipice you're about to step off--it's more like a wide and welcoming river. There's a boat--that boat is whatever you need it to be--your professors, friends, family, your hobbies or faith, your favorite books or music--so you're not alone. And if you brave the rapids and follow the currents that guide you, you will not only discover your own success, but you will enjoy and grow from the journey.

This is what I wish for you going forward--a wonderful, exciting, safe and successful journey to your academic destinations. Believe in yourselves and in each other. Stay motivated. Make it happen.
Thank you.