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## Google's Larry Page offers advice to the Class of 2009 at the University of Michigan

by Tina Reed | The Ann Arbor News  
Saturday May 02, 2009, 12:47 PM



Photo by Lon Horwedel, The Ann Arbor News

Two University of Michigan graduates sport 2009 sunglasses as they and classmates enjoy commencement festivities at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor Saturday.

In a sentence, what's the secret to changing the world? When Google co-founder Larry Page spoke to the University of Michigan's freshest crop of graduates Saturday - many whom are entering the job market in one of the toughest economies in decades - the answer was simple.

"Always work hard on something uncomfortably exciting," Page told about 4,000 graduates and an estimated crowd of 35,000 to 40,000 people at Michigan Stadium during U-M's spring commencement.

Page, who received a bachelor's degree in engineering with a concentration in computer engineering from U-M in 1995, said his roots at U-M run deep. His grandfather, an assembly line worker for General Motors in Flint, insisted that Page's father attend college at U-M. The university was where his father and mother met, Page said, and his brother also attended U-M.

"This is way more than a homecoming for me. It's not easy for me to express how proud I am to be here," Page said. "It's an amazing institution that is responsible for my very existence."

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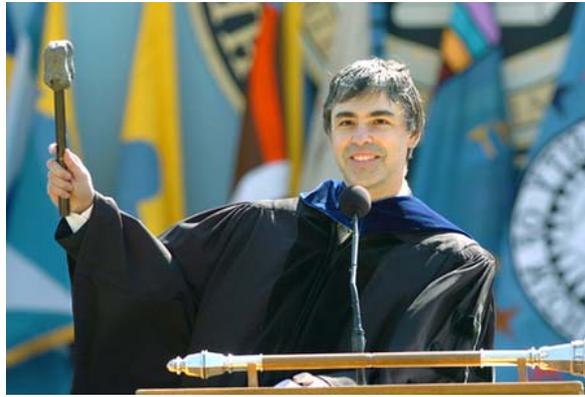


Photo by Lon Horwedel, The Ann Arbor News

Google co-founder Larry Page, discussing his ties to Michigan, holds up a hammer his grandfather used to protect himself while on the picket line when he was an autoworker in Flint. Speaking during the University of Michigan commencement at Michigan Stadium, Page, a U-M alum, urged the Class of 2009 to try things that haven't been done before.

Page told the crowd he was 23 years old when he had an idea in the middle of the night that was the origin of Google. In the mid-1990s, while he was a graduate student at Stanford, Page and a colleague undertook a research project to find a better way to search the Internet, ultimately creating Google. Today, the 10-year-old company has annual revenues of more than \$16 billion, more than 19,000 employees and two citations on Fortune magazine's list of best places to work.

Page, who received an honorary doctorate in engineering Saturday, told the graduates to not be afraid of using their knowledge to try new things in ways that haven't been tried before.

"Since no one else is crazy enough to do it, you'll have little competition," he said.

Commencement returned to Michigan Stadium after a change in venue last year due to a major renovation under way at the facility. This year construction took a time-out and parts of the stadium were blocked off to allow graduation to return to Big House. Spectators and graduates sat on the west side of the bowl, with the podium on the field.

Several of the commencement speakers acknowledged the economic recession and the stressed job market the graduates are entering.

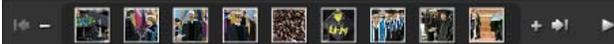
U-M President Mary Sue Coleman said she'd never sent a graduating class into a situation like what the country is currently facing.



University of Michigan Spring Commencement 2009

LON HORWEDEL, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

University of Michigan graduates, and proud members of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity, pose for a photo in the stands at Michigan Stadium as they wait for Saturday, May 2nd's Spring Commencement to begin.



"We all know the headlines, the economy is fragile, the auto industry is bleeding, foreclosures are up and the job market is down," Coleman said. "And yet, I have tremendous confidence in the ability of this class of

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graduates, the Class of 2009, to be leaders who will move us forward as a community, a state and as a nation."

If the graduates were worried, they'd didn't show it. The mood at the stadium was celebratory and optimistic as graduates cheered, waved to family members and posed for pictures on the sunny, mild morning.

Graduate Ben Townsend, who received his degree in comparative literature, said he plans to live in Ann Arbor through the summer and spend time looking for a job.

"I'm just enjoying the day right now and I'll start figuring out what I'll do next tomorrow," Townsend said.

Arthur Edge said graduating was bittersweet, but he is ready to find a job and start working. He earned a degree in science and chemical engineering and plans to find a pharmaceutical job, but he doesn't expect to be able to find a job Michigan.

"I'm from Detroit and have enjoyed living there," Edge said. "But starting out, I just don't see that opportunity to find a job there."

Several graduates echoed his sentiments, expressing doubt they'd find a job or the city life they were looking for within the state.

"I've always wanted to be in a big city. It's so vibrant, there are so many people, there's so much diversity, so many things to do," said Freya Motafram, who earned a degree in business administration. She wants to move to a place like Chicago or New York City. There's nothing like that in Michigan, she said.

But other students, like Erica Braverman, who earned a degree in Spanish, say they plan to either find jobs or continue their studies in Michigan. "If you have to move, you have to move," she said. "But I'd rather stay."

Either way, Motafram walked away from the commencement feeling inspired.

"People were telling us, 'Don't look at these tough economic times and how rough things are. Try to look at these times as a great opportunity to take a dream and run with it.' Just like Larry Page."

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A good time it was!

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"They come and they go Hobbs, they come and they go."

Good luck Class of 09!

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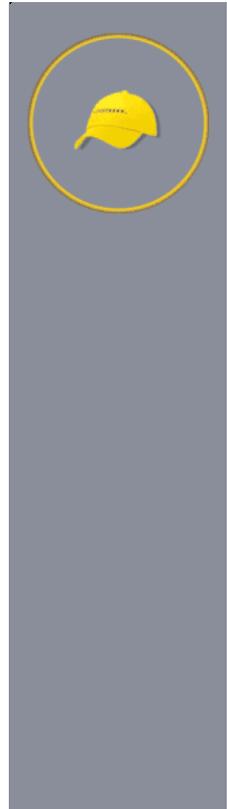
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