

Commencement Keynote Speech
Alumnus Alfonso Morales '92
Chief of Police – Milwaukee Police Department

Carroll University

Good morning! I would like to recognize: Chairman Jose Olivieri, Chair Emeritus - Pershing MacAllister, Carroll University Trustees, President - Cindy Gnadinger, Provost – Mark Blegen, Senior Leadership Team and Staff, Students, Families, and Friends. Thank you for having me.

When asked to give a commencement speech for this class I was absolutely honored. These are moments of joy, family, and community that you will forever remember. Graduates please stand and look around you, look at your parents, grandparents, siblings, and all those who have worked so hard to give you this opportunity that we celebrate today. Graduates give them a round of applause to say “Thank you”.

I would like to thank Dr. David Simpson for instilling in me the notion that an education is a foundation to be built upon. It is more than a means to itself. We have all come to Carroll seeking that foundation, knowing that when today comes we leave with the foundation to be leaders in whatever field we choose. I’m sure that each one of you has someone like Dr. Simpson, a faculty member, a mentor, a person who embodies the Carroll ethos. That person respects you by building trust and valuing your relationship. They exhibit their integrity through fairness and honesty, and they show stewardship by continuing to cultivate your relationship. Continuing these relationships highlights the caliber of the Carroll faculty. It demonstrates their care for you and their commitment to ensuring you have the foundation for success.

When I was asked to address you, many different themes came to mind, for example: respect, honor, service, and integrity. Each of these themes, while noble by themselves, felt incomplete. There is a theme that encompasses each of the prior themes and what I believe each of you embody. That theme is leadership. The Army has an acronym of Leadership. L-D-R-S-H-I-P

L stands for Loyalty: The loyalty of your people is a gift they give you when, and only when, you deserve it-when you teach them well, treat them fairly, and live the concepts you talk about. Loyalty is a two-way street; you should not expect loyalty without being prepared to give it as well.

D stands for Duty: The essence of duty is acting in the absence of orders or direction from others, based on an inner sense of what is morally and professionally right. Duty begins with everything required of you by law, regulation, and orders but it includes much more than that. As professionals do your work not just to the minimum standard, but to the very best of your ability. Commit to excellence in all aspects of your professional responsibility so that when the job is done, you can look back and say, “I couldn’t have given any more.” Take initiative, figuring out what needs to be done before being told to do so. Take responsibility of your actions and those of your subordinates.

R stands for respect: Respect finds a place in this acronym, the Carroll Ethos, and the Milwaukee Police Department Code of Conduct. It is crucial we be civil and honor the dignity of each person that we encounter in the world.

S stands for selfless service: Selfless service is putting the needs of others before our own. It is contributing to the greater good of society to improve outcomes for all people.

H stands for honor: Honor is to live up to our values. As Carroll Alumni we live up to the Pioneer values of being part of a rich history and engaging in the spirit of exploration and discovery that began with our founders. Pioneers are eager to know more about the world they live in and how they will make their mark by contributing a fresh perspective.

I stands for integrity: We must always do what is right, legally and morally. Especially when no one is watching.

P stands for personal courage: We face fear, danger, or adversity and we must have the courage to overcome these obstacles.

Today is about you, not me, and so I am honored that you would invite me to share my Carroll journey with you. I was born and raised in the City of Milwaukee and each day I go to work committed to improving it. Growing up as a member of a large family on the near north side I count myself as blessed to be the first in my family to have the privilege to attend college. My parents didn't have that opportunity but they saw the value in it and enabled me to attend Carroll University, and to this day I am grateful for that. Just over a year ago I was honored to be named the 19th Chief of Police of the City of Milwaukee. A tremendous burden of responsibility accompanies that honor; the Chief has to make decisions and accept the ultimate responsibility for those decisions. After reflecting on this new responsibility, I knew that my Carroll education would be the foundation that would support me on this new journey as it has supported me throughout my life. My Carroll experience taught me that even though I had graduated I was far from finished learning.

In the Police Department followership is the precursor to leadership. The Police Academy teaches all officers to be leaders, but to be an effective leader you must first be an effective follower. For example, we recruit incredibly talented people to be police officers, but before they embark on their own they are paired with a Field Training Officer, a mentor who is invested in their success. The recruit follows that Field Training Officer, learning from their experience, the recruit grows into a leader and the cycle repeats itself. Using the Carroll foundation, I continued to learn and grow through the ranks to get to the point where I am obligated to teach the next generation of leaders.

Every one of you leaves today with the same foundation to be a leader. There will be times where it is necessary to embrace a role of followership as you go on your path. Take those opportunities, build on them, never stop learning and use the foundation that started at Carroll to achieve your goals. Over the coming years you will find success. Remember, that success comes with a debt. That debt is to take the roll of the Dr. Simpsons, the role of the mentor you followed on your journey and be a leader to the next generation.