Good afternoon everyone! It's nice to see you all on this important day.

Commencement is a wonderful time of the year. For all of us, it is the culmination of a year of relentless efforts in teaching and research. Students will graduate and carry with them all the rich experiences they accumulated over all these years, from their interactions with our faculty in teaching and in research... In the fall new students will join us, and this cycle will recommence. It is this renewal process— the farewell to the graduates and the welcome to the new ones — that we are celebrating every year...

I will begin by saying what a privilege it is to serve as the dean of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering...

And by telling our 2007 graduates what an honor it is to be standing before you and addressing you this morning.

You have accomplished so much, and we are all very proud of you.

As a parent of two USC students (one of whom is an engineering major), I want to especially welcome my allies, the people largely responsible for the achievements we celebrate today. Congratulations, parents, family and friends of the Viterbi School's graduates, on a job well done!

As you prepare to enter the “real world”, remember that it grows more complex each day, and so do the challenges and opportunities unfolding before you.

But don't worry... You have studied the right disciplines for your times... and you have been equipped with the best toolkit for the 21st Century.

The USC Viterbi School of Engineering is now 105 years old (and believe me it does need a bit of a face lift- we are working on it...).

But I truly believe that for all the scientific advancements made during our first 100 years, the world will look back on that time as just a prelude to the age of marvels we are moving into now.

George Bernard Shaw said: You see things; and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?"

And in the words of Theodore von Karman, Engineers create the world that has never been.

Science, engineering and technical innovation will change the world in ways never before seen or imagined... They will provide new and radical solutions to fundamental problems.
Today, our skills are needed more than ever before. The challenges we face as a society encompass all fronts, and the key to the solutions we seek often have their basis in technology and engineering.

It is important for you to engage with the world — as it has a great need for all you have to offer: precise and deep knowledge, dispassionate judgment, pervasive problem solving ability, astonishing creativity, boundless energy and optimism, a talent for innovation, integrity and compassion, and the thirst to make a difference and to leave your mark, in a connected, truly global world.

It will be you who will solve vexing climate problems, who will master the miracles of biology to eradicate diseases, who will educate and enlighten, and who will help lift millions from poverty, who will relight the engine of economic development... You will be called to solve challenges such as preventing nuclear terror; Making solar energy economical; Engineering better medicines.

These and many others comprise some of the most daunting challenges we face as humankind. The NAE called them the Grand Challenges. The Viterbi School has pioneered in promoting awareness about them and will be joining hands with three other universities to host the second annual NAE Grand Challenges Summit on campus October 6-8, 2010. I invite you all to visit our NAE Summit website to learn more about how you may be able to participate.

One most important challenge is answering the energy sustainability question: How do we power a rapidly expanding world while maximizing efficiencies and minimizing impact to the environment?

Tom Friedman, the noted author of the flat world, gave a well-received commencement speech at Williams College a couple of years ago. His number one tip for graduates was: do what you love. The flatter the world gets, the more essential it is that you do what inspires you and what fulfills you.

Friedman said that the most important attributes you can have are adaptability and a creative imagination, the ability to be the first on your block to figure out how all these enabling tools, which are now available to so many more people, can be put together in new and exciting ways.

And, remember, while you’re doing these great things, where you came from –

Today you are joining the Trojan Family as brand new alumni... It’s one of the most valuable benefits of a USC education... (And we will look to connect with you all over the world!)

You are also becoming the newest ambassadors of the Viterbi School – ones we are most proud to have represent us out in the world.
And remember too who got you to this day...

Your journey has become possible by the constant care and support from the most important people who are gathered here today—parents, families, and friends. So, on a day in which you are rightly the center of attention, I would ask you graduates to rise and join me in a round of applause, for those who have supported you each and every step in your academic journey, your family and friends.

As you leave today with our blessing, that of your parents and friends and with the official Viterbi seal of approval, this is my wish for you: Do what you love and reach for the stars! And when you reach there, take a moment to look back and you will see a caring and supporting institution that admires you, is proud of you and embraces for you all the wonders you are certain to accomplish.

Fight on!