

Running Head: Graduate College Luncheon

## **2017 Graduate College Luncheon**

EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE IVORY TOWER,  
I LEARNED IN MY DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Debra L. Haggins

Hampton University

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12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Student Center Ballroom

Twenty-five years ago, Robert Fulgum (1990) penned a simple yet powerful piece of prose that begins with these words: *Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten.* Personally, I have written sermons based upon this simple truth and childlike wisdom. I reared my sons based upon its strength and the potency of its integrity. I have taught hundreds, maybe even thousands of students from kindergarten to graduate school based upon its timelessness and reliability.

And now, at an academic pinnacle, I yet fall back on what has blessed me over the years in my own life. I am using Fulgum's model to reflect upon the semesters and years I have spent immersed in learning the dynamics, the rudiments and the language. I am using Fulgum's model to reflect upon the specific stipulations of the engagement and marriage of form and function to social scientific research and how that union is applied to the proverbial ivory tower we know and love so well.

The ivory tower: a metaphor, a fairy tale or an abstraction for those who don't understand it, and a lifestyle for scholars, theorists and researchers who cannot envision life without it. We are the gifted ones who make our contributions to God's world with a very special gift; the gift of **intellectualism**. The gift, the ability, the desire, the passion, the fortitude, the insatiable curiosity to know more, to discover more and to create more. This luncheon, Dr. Penn-Marshall, *honors* the gift. This moment brings *significance* to the gift. The honorees are *humbled* by the gift. Humbled because none of us made it here on our own. There are people who made it their business help to us transition into

the world of scholarly research and writing. With a little assistance from various course readings and a fusion of knowledge and wisdom gained over my time in the program, here is my attempt, through my own experiences and research agenda, to make the social scientific poetic and prose-like.

**Everything I Need to Know About the Ivory Tower, I Learned in my Doctoral Program**

**PRAY**: Sometimes it's the only help you have; *He's always listening.*

**RESPECT THE PROCESS**: Becoming a scholar is a multi-level endeavor not an event.  
*take the time to become.*

**DETERMINE NOW**: Any mention of ABD is foul language; curse words if you will, an insult, rated R for ridiculous. *keep your eyes on the prize and move toward it.*

**FOCUS NARROWLY, YET READ WIDELY**: It's out there, just *keep searching for it.*

**PLAN STRATEGICALLY**: It's true...if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. *don't fail.*

**AMBIGUITY & FRUSTRATION**: Are parts of the process; *work through it.*

**CONFLICT & DISAGREEMENT**: Are natural & healthy parts of the process; *mature through it.*

**ASK FOR & ACCEPT HELP**: Whenever you need it and where ever you find. *we all need it.*

**INNOVATION & DISRUPTION**: Provide energy for the process; *don't forget to harness it.*

**EFFICIENCY & PRODUCTIVITY** Will become your best friends: *embrace it.*

**IDEAS & BELIEFS**: Yours will transform over time; *journey with it.*

**SHIFT YOUR THINKING**: Begin to think like a scholar not a student; *shift with it!*

**CLARIFY YOUR VALUES**: Reprioritize the importance of your degree. *it's worth it!*

**UPGRADE YOUR SKILLS**: Qualitatively and quantitatively: *it's called methodology.*

**EMBRACE NEW OPPORTUNITIES**: What contributions can I give to make the world better? Think about it; some facet of society, some corner of the world needs your help.

**IT'S YOUR SHEEPSKIN**, *now employ it!*

Strategize, modify, adapt, innovate and disrupt to meet the demands of your own personal

**TRANSFORMATION**; *your destiny depends upon it and your life demands it.*

**HELP SOMEBODY**: Be the encouragement you had or you wish you would have had.

Each one, reach one! Help another body; another emerging scholar, who is now where you were then;

*that's how you celebrate it!*

Finally, on a less objective and more personal note: I still hesitate to call myself a scholar. However, this novice researcher is now humbled and honored by the academic trajectory of all disciplined inquiry in social scientific research. The process changed me. The difficulties strengthened me. And the triumphs, well, they emboldened me. Listen, every setback, was actually a set-up that led me just a little bit closer to the fulfillment of my goal; to earn the terminal degree. You see it's not so that I can be called Dr. That's great, no doubt. It's not so that I can use the Ph.D. as a status symbol or a point of pride, although I am super-excited and happy glad.

But for me according to the plan and the trajectory God has for my life, the attainment of the degree, the donning of the hood, the turning of the tassel, the bars on the sleeves, the conferring of the degree by President Harvey, for me all of this 'wonderfulness' more than anything else, is a great opportunity to take the process including everything it taught me; and with my head, my heart and my hands take this education for life and give it back to the Kingdom of God. With this degree, I want to make churches stronger. I want to make pastors stronger. I want to make congregations,

communities and people stronger. **I want to make the world better, more livable, more compassionate, and yes, smarter.**

Among mentors and peers, I acknowledge that the heuristic life is for me and my fellow graduates. Administrators, Deans, Dissertation Chairs and Committee members, “Thank you”! You have done a wonderful job with us and on behalf of all of us to each of you, once again, “Thank you”! You led us, guided us, pushed us and it worked! We are here sharing this moment with you, because of you. Your efforts, your willingness to share; your mark of excellence is on each of us. Therefore, we are properly primed, now, for a life of academic-curiosity. We are the embodiment of an impassioned-intellect commissioned to embark upon a life of rigorous and reasoned scholarship. In my case, this milestone is *for the glory of God and God alone.*

May the Lord bless you and thank you for listening!  
Debra L. Haggins, Ph.D. Candidate