Who would’ve thought a kid that had no idea what he wanted to do after high school could be standing here today?!?!

I have to admit that it was hard deciding what to talk about today… Do we sit here and reminisce about the thousands of hours we’ve spent studying, testing, or sitting in traffic on college blvd. No, I’m sure we’re all ready for a break from that!

Should I go cliché and hit you with a bunch of quotes to inspire and pump you up for the next chapters of your life? No, I know for a fact there are people in this room that can pump out differential equations faster than me or recall theorems that I would have to look up, and I know that everyone in this room is willing to work just as hard as I am because if we were the type of people who gave up when things got difficult we wouldn’t be sitting here today. So I’m far too modest in this company to stand up here on a soap box and do that.

We are all here in the same boat today, and don’t get me wrong I am extremely honored to accept this award today, but if I was to boil it all down the only real difference between us is that I have 5 mins to say something.

So I’ve decided to tell a little story, a little life experience if you will.

At the end of last year I had it all figured out! I was getting ready to graduate in December, and my team was just putting the finishing touches on a senior project for Hamilton Sundstrand that the companies head engineer had valued at a quarter of a million dollars. So I was planning on beginning work for them as an intern over the summer and see where it leads from there.

Next fall I was going to start grad school at UCSD. I applied there after doing quite well for myself here and having great recommendations from my professors, needless to say I assumed I would be accepted.

Well… at the end of January I found out they had selected two new engineers for the open positions at HS. I was not one of them. Within that same week, I received an email from UCSDs graduate admissions office. I was turned down… To be very blunt, at this point I was extremely frustrated and felt like nothing was going my way.

Now to make a long story short, soon after this I took a small job at San Diego BMW motorcycles, but…

BMW just happened to have a new sportbike coming out at the time.

The owner of the dealership was very interested in starting racing

With my previous experience in racing I was able to get all the right parts of the puzzle together

Now I’m the team manager and race engineer of a successful race team. I’m actually working my dream job!

And, not too long ago I found out that I will be returning to SDSU & UCSD in joint doctoral program so I will still be attending UCSD, but doing my research here with Professor Bhattacharjee!

Now there is a point to this story:

When thing s were looking the worst for I actually got a nudge back in the direction that I really wanted to go in the first place, and look I don’t believe that life is mapped out a fate determines our destiny, but I do believe life presents us with certain opportunities, and it’s what we do with those opportunities that make us who we are.

After we leave here today and you’re looking to start that next chapter keep in mind that if things get unmistakably unfair, life just might be giving you an opportunity!

Speaking of opportunity I’m going to take this last minute to thank a few very important people.

Mom and Sister

Let me return to school full time

Invested more in me than her own 401k\

Art Gerwig and Takashi Nakajima

Getting me started in physical sciences

Giving me the tools to handle everything that lied ahead

Project team members

For being either crazy enough or brave enough to work with me over the years

Mike Lester

For letting me ransack your machine shop

Help with my surfboards

Professors of the ME department

Giving me everything I need to get to this point.

Last thing I want to say… for all of you wearing one of these wonderful orange tassels congratulation San Diego State class of 2010!!!!!!!