FAREWELL REFLECTIONS
Delivered by Cheryl Yeung, Hong Kong
December 2, 2009

Good afternoon everyone. First, let me express my gratitude to the WAA and ISS for hosting this celebration for the soon-to-graduate international students. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all faculty members, families and friends that have joined us this afternoon, because if it were not for their support and encouragement all the way, we would not be standing at Kohl Center in a couple of weeks.

Let me take you back to the first day we arrived on campus. It was pretty adventurous, a bunch of clueless freshmen running around, trying to get themselves oriented, wondering where they would fit in. Everyone was captivated with various conflicting emotions: Anxiety, fear, anticipation and happiness. Yet we were prepared and ready for success. And of course, being thousands of miles away from home, we finally had that sweet feeling of independence. It was obvious that we were preparing to begin a new phase in our lives, just like we are doing in a couple of weeks from now. Freshman year taught me that my goals were going to be constantly evolving, and sometimes, as in my case, changing completely. I knew that I was prepared for this journey, and I kept striving for success, but to also have fun all the way. And, as my college years unfolded, I realized how fortunate I was to be starting that journey here at Wisconsin.

I know of no other place that is so rich in personality and talent as is evident in the countless International Cultural Shows. I know of no other place where every student is extremely intelligent but still knows how to have a blast - think of how many Halloweens and football games we survived. I know of no other place where everyone is generous with their time and efforts, committing into things like fundraising and cultural awareness activities. I know of no other place where the ice cream culture is so rich, that you see everyone walking out of Memorial Union with at least one cup in hand. And, I know of no other place where North Face jackets and Ugg boots are the unofficial school uniform.

We have learned to speak different languages, learned to appreciate and celebrate different cultures, and learned to use our knowledge and passion to engage our communities. It is the Wisconsin experience that has taught us to dream, that has taught us how to become a global citizen and that we will help changing the society we belong to at home one day.

As I think back on the years I have spent at University of Wisconsin, my mind is filled with memories. Here, I would like to share with you some of the memories that I take with me as I leave.

I take with me the memory of sledding with dining trays at the big slope of Observatory Drive at midnight in freshman year. Being one from a non-snowy country, with limited skills in sledding unlike my Midwest buddies, I lost control and was very close in hitting the tree. A flip to the side, just like the move you always see in Jacky Chan’s movies, had saved me, and since then, I continue to incorporate that flip into my college sledding experience.

I take with me the memory of a hilarious WAA event that me and other interns organized. It was a freezing night where 5 of us were handing out warm chocolaty cookies and hot cocoa outside College Library. Of course students wouldn’t say no to free sugar boost while camping out at
library. However, the famous cookie truck had a delay and would arrive 20 minutes late, and worst came worst, a blizzard just started! Surprisingly, the line of students didn’t get shortened as you would have thought, but started growing instead. Many of them were even chanting in unison – “WE WANT COOKIES. GIVE US COOKIES NOW!” I remember how amazed I felt with the fact that under that kind of weather, the only thing students really cared about was the free cookies, instead of the chance of getting frostbites.

My list of happy memories goes forever and I can’t share all of them today. The point I am trying to make is that, not only me myself, but everyone here today have enjoyed the journey at Wisconsin, but we are ready to leave; we are prepared to leave. We will walk away from this campus in a few weeks, but we will take with us our academic experiences and the unforgettable memories like mine that we have formed here at Wisconsin.

The friends that I have made here are lifelong and have forever become part of my family. As we part ways, I am not going to say that I have no fears in entering the real world, because it is natural to all of us. However, I believe that wherever I go, I will look back on my wonderful time here at Wisconsin, and smile back.

In closing, I would like to share my favorite quote from Steve Jobs:

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice, heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary… Stay hungry, stay foolish.”

I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors!”