

Steven Koblik
Pomona College Commencement 2005
May 15, 2005

President Oxtoby, members of the Board of Trustees, Faculty, graduating seniors, ladies and gentlemen:

I want to thank the Board of Trustees for the singular honor of this Pomona College degree. This award is deeply meaningful to me and much appreciated. I am grateful. I treasure my 21 years here and how the experiences and friendships have so enriched my life. I want, too, to thank my Pomona faculty colleagues, present, retired, and those no longer here who mentored, educated, tolerated and cajoled me on a career that has been so wonderfully stimulating and rewarding.

But most importantly, I want to congratulate the class of 2005 and thank them for sharing this special day for them, their families and friends, with me. The greatest privilege that Pomona gave me was the opportunity to work with the wonderful students who have walked these hallowed grounds. Many times I sat in this hall at this time of year with mixed feelings: a sense of loss at the departure of young friends eager to encounter the world, and a sense of joy that they would contribute their talent to our society.

There are so many memories, so many stories of what your predecessors have accomplished. I would like to recount just one for you. Last spring, a Pomona alum and I spent a day together. She had come to Pomona from a less than privileged circumstance. Her experience here, both academic and personal, was enriching in terms of her intellectual leadership, growth and maturation. She was an individual whom other students and faculty members relied upon. She began her career in business, quickly received an MBA in public finance at the University of Chicago, and has had a brilliant career as a public servant. She is near the pinnacle of her profession, while at the same time being the proud mother of two children and an active member of her community.

“Steve,” she said, “would you do me a favor? You may think it strange,” she continued, “but I have decided to complete my career in public finance and seek a new one as a Lutheran minister. Would you write a letter of recommendation to the Fuller Seminary for me?”

I did. Today she has begun that new career.

I did not think her choice was strange. She is a person who has always sought, takes responsibility for her actions, lived by her own values, and found ways to serve society. I would suggest that she is an excellent example for you to reflect upon on this joyous day, and as you think about the next stages of your life.

Good luck and thanks, again.



About Steven Koblik

Steven Koblik is president of the Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens. The Library's rare books and manuscripts comprise one of the largest and most extensively used collections in America outside of the Library of Congress. From 1968–1991, Koblik was the Warren Finney Day Professor of History at Pomona College, where he received three Wig Awards for outstanding teaching. He has also served as dean of the faculty at Scripps College and as President of Reed College (1992-2001). Koblik is active in numerous civil service organizations including the California Council for the Humanities and the Pasadena Library Foundation, and he is a member of the Scripps College Board of Trustees. He received his Ph.D. from Northwestern University.