

Sharon Camp '65
Pomona College Commencement 2013
May 19, 2013

Delivered in absentia by Professor Jill Grigsby

Dear Pomona Class of 2013:

Please accept my most heartfelt congratulations on getting to this point in your life, and my deepest apologies for missing your celebration. I am truly sorry not to be with you — but not for your sake, actually, as much as for mine. I was really looking forward to my first return to the Pomona campus in almost half a century. I will also admit that I was really looking forward to dropping a little surprise on the Alumni Office in person. They should've remembered that I spent most of my undergraduate career playing elaborate practical jokes on my friends before they contemplated my long-awaited return to campus.

You see, I do a lot of fundraising in my current job, so I suspect some high-priced major gift consultant told the Alumni office: “Sharon Camp, isn't she the mother of Plan B emergency contraception, that controversial morning-after pill? Boy, she must be worth a bundle. You should give her an honorary PhD or something.” Sorry, guys. I already gave away all the proceeds from the sale of Plan B. Half the share of our tiny company went back to the nonprofit organization that financed the product's development and helped grow it to profitability. The other half went into a charitable remainder trust. Oh, I think I just heard some ears perk up in the Alumni Office. Okay, I should have told them before now: Pomona College is in fact one of the four beneficiaries of a trust created with proceeds from the sale of Plan B. And I believe the trust is worth about \$2.5 million at the moment. I apologize for not letting anyone on campus know, but I was getting ready to take on a brand-new job with the Guttmacher Institute, the very best job in my field, so I simply forgot. And I expect the Alumni Office knows that the amount of the trust and the proportion currently allocated to Pomona is unimportant, since I can change the beneficiaries and the allocation whenever I want to, up until the day I die. And if Pomona ever gives me any reason to lose my bragging rights as a Pomona grad, they are out of there. Oh my gosh, did I say that out loud? Okay, so maybe somebody knew about the charitable trust all along. Can fundraising consultants really dig this stuff out all along with the value of your house and the names of your pets? Oh dear. Maybe they didn't really blow an honorary PhD after all.

Okay, so let's get back to you. I do have one piece of advice. Seriously now, at least once in your life, put everything you've got behind some big, hairy, audacious idea (and I plagiarized this term). I've done the big, hairy, audacious idea a few times myself, and believe me, there's nothing that works better for growing brain power. That's especially true if you've no relevant experience or qualifications for the task. So don't ever let a lack of qualifications stop you, from anything. If I can impersonate a pharmaceutical executive for seven years, with Genetics and Astronomy as my only two Pomona science courses, you can too! Yes, I know your parents think you've just spent four years getting qualified to do something that will make you self-supporting, or at least qualify you to pursue the next step in your academic career, so go out and do it! But don't get stuck there. It's okay to start small, with a few dollars and a few friends — just be sure the potential impact is huge, because nothing is more fun than having a big



impact on some of the things you care about. And if you make a little money along the way, just remember the helpful people at the Pomona Alumni Office. They live to serve.

Warm best wishes for a life full of fun,

Sharon L. Camp, PhD

About Sharon Camp '65

Sharon Camp '65 is the president and CEO of the Guttmacher Institute, the leading policy research organization in sexual and reproductive health and rights. Prior to leading the Guttmacher Institute, she served as the president and CEO of Women's Capital Corporation, a start-up responsible for the development and commercialization of Plan B emergency contraception and as senior vice president of Population Action International. She was also largely responsible for bringing together the highly successful International Consortium for Emergency Contraception. The author or co-author of more than 70 publications on family planning and related subjects, she has chaired the boards of Family Health International, the National Council for International Health, the International Center for Research on Women, and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project. She has served as an elected director of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA), AVSC International, Management Sciences for Health and Population Action International, and currently serves as a senior lecturer in the Department of Population and Family Health at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. While a student at Pomona College, Camp worked on the Metate yearbook staff, served as a tour guide, played badminton, participated in Model United Nations, and completed a major in international relations. In addition to her Pomona College degree, Camp holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University.