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This is quite an honor. Knowing that I was going to have to say something, and having no idea what it would be, I set out to do some research in the time honored scientific tradition of asking some people that I knew. The first thing I learned is that grown-ups take commencement speeches very seriously. There might be a dozen or two of my close friends and coworkers watching this three minutes, which is, in point of fact, a lot more people than came to see me graduate in the first place. A lot of grown ups want to give one of these. It is hard to square this fact with the other thing I learned, which is that zero people remember anything the speakers said at their own graduation. I'm pretty sure you will have forgotten this by the time you go to lunch.

So how does this make sense? I think it must be that for a grown-up, this is the closest thing to going back in time to tell yourself what you wish you knew when you were 21. It must be that as slightly older people, we think we know something about how our lives should have been lived. This is a dubious proposition in the best case, and I am not the best case. Nobody is more surprised than I am to be standing here. (Actually, there are some professors up here that are more surprised. I know this because some of them forgot that I can read their Facebook comments, since they added me to their friends years ago.)

Listening to Professor Chen's introduction a minute ago, it's clear that everything I have ever done that was considered noteworthy was a part of no plan. I had no plan to work at Google. I might not have even responded to the recruiter if my friend hadn't pushed me to do it. I had no plan to work on the Obama campaigns; I got asked because I was at Google working in a special technical niche they happened to need. I certainly had no plan to get mixed up in healthcare.gov; I got asked because a few people thought I was useful on the campaign. I don't know why the press wrote that story as if I was the hero; I was actually just one part of an incredibly capable and talented team, and it's because of them that we're able to stand up today and say that with more than 16 million people having gained access to health care, the Affordable Care Act is working. (That was my assigned talking point, by the way. So I got that in there.)

Today I'm working for the President on an array of government problems that make healthcare.gov look like a pleasant little diversion. In this I have a set of allies that includes some of the world's most powerful people and quite possibly the strongest engineering team in the United States. My point is not to boast but to make sure you understand my full meaning when I say that none of us has an answer key, it's sometimes an exaggeration to say we have a "plan," and none of us would be there if we had been following a script.

I'm sure this advice doesn't make much sense to some of you. I'm not even sure it's advice. Possibly some of you whose names are at the top of the program here, graduating with honors, going to grad school, who know where your next stop is and where you're going after that. I wish you all the best, but I was never going to have anything useful to say to you since your lives are nothing like mine. Some others of you, are maybe a little relieved to see your name in the program at all, maybe you P/NC'd a couple classes that

went down to the wire. Maybe you don't know what to do now, or where you're going to be living in a month. For you, I thought it might be useful to hear that from now on, your ability to make a plan will matter a lot less than your ability to respond and adapt to unexpected new inputs, whether those new inputs come in the form of crisis or opportunity. If you should find your mind wandering a little bit in the 2 hours we have to go here, maybe spend a minute thinking about what kind of story you might like to tell when you're back on the stage getting your honorary Ph.D. in ten or twenty years. And then get ready for it to all play out nothing like you expected.