Keynote Speech by Glen Nowak  
Grady College Fall Convocation, 2006  
“You may not realize it now, but you’ve made a wise investment”

I. “Good News” – A World of unprecedented opportunities, a strong foundation thanks to UGA

a. A world of unprecedented numbers and types of media –

- As your parents may remember, 25 some years ago, the world of media was quite simple—there were three major TV networks, most people read a daily newspaper, and telephones had cords.

- We still have TV networks and some people still read a daily newspaper—most likely your grandparents—but things have changed considerably.

- There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of ways for us to get news, information, and education. We’re surrounded by media—often in the form of electronic, interactive, and highly targeted formats—including specialized publications, web-based publications, new TV networks and programs, and blogs continue to spring forth.

- Add to that the many things that have no doubt helped keep you awake at night—things like I-pods, YouTubes and Myspaces, and the growing abilities of cellphones (make and receive calls and e-mail, surf the web, watch Thursday night football, and probably soon be able microwave meals)–and it’s apparent your entering a world of amazing possibilities.

b. Our lives revolve around the things you’ve been studying and learning to use -- media and communication

- You’ll be among the people we rely upon for news and information, entertainment, managing and addressing emergencies and crises, packaging and presenting new ideas, products, and services, and getting us to pay attention to information that can benefit our lives and well being.
It may not seem so, but in your four, five, six, seven or more years at the Grady College, you’ve been introduced to many of the tools that are needed and used to effectively inform about things and to persuade them to do (or not do) things. You likely know about the importance of understanding audiences, communicating in words and images that audiences use and understand, and the need for messages to be interesting, relevant, and engaging. That might seem easy and obvious, but you’ll find in the coming months and years, when you work with people who haven’t studied and worked in communication fields—most people don’t know those things.

You’ll soon find that much of what we know, use and believe has been created or shaped by media and communication experts—in the world I work in communication people have created or helped create 1) principles for talking about health and medical information, 2) medical terms—SARS, and 3) ways to get attention and influence behavior – “National Influenza Vaccination Week.” We’ve had the CDC director on the Opray Winfrey show as well as the cover of Vogue.

c. **Increasing numbers of Baby Boomers are retiring or transitioning – and that trend will continue regardless of their/our best efforts or desires.**

Thanks to your time at the Grady College, you’re likely entering the world with more knowledge and experience using new media and new approaches to media/communication than many who are currently in the workforce.

You’re more likely to know and understand the need to use multiple media in multiple ways (e.g., CDC influenza campaign—I think we used every aspect of the Grady College in the past few months when it came to flu vaccine—news media, public relations, advertising, broadcast news, and even the virtual reality world – Whyville—where apparently about 4-5 million of the virtual residents have gotten virtual flu shots in the past month.

**II. Challenges they will face – you’ll likely find many things may not go as planned or desired**

- Getting your first job in the world of communications – my first job in the world of communications was as an assistant manager at a Burger King in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. May not seem like a communications job—and it definitely wasn’t what I had in mind when I graduated with my degree in
journalism—but I almost lost it because I wasn’t effectively communicating with the 16 and 17 year olds I was responsible for supervising.

- Competition – along with entering a world of unprecedented communication venues and opportunities, you’ll also be entering a world in which there are increasing numbers of people trained and interested in communication. You’ll need to find ways to highlight your strengths and skills and give people reasons to hire or select you over other applicants.

III. Four pieces of advice as you embark upon your journeys

- Find and build on your passion and interests (writing, entertaining, persuading, blending different media)

- Add value – work to improve products and situations, work to leave things in better shape

- Make new mistakes – learning never really ends

- Network – and within your area of expertise and interest, but also beyond for you never know where new paths and routes may take you. (From Burger King, UW, UGA, CDC – from covering school boards and city council meetings to advising the world’s leading scientists and physicians on how to communicate)

  ➢ I rely on the Grady network to help me find qualified people for jobs at CDC.

I thank you for the opportunity this morning to offer you my thoughts – and I wish you much success and happiness as you go forward building on the investment you and your parents have made.