

Recently, I heard a quote that resonated with me. I felt the truth of the words being spoken. In 2018, Will Smith stated *Quote --- God placed the best things in life on the other side of fear. --- End quote.*

Fear, what an enemy it can be for us all. There have been many times when I decided to face this well-known and unrelenting enemy and the unpleasant emotional struggles it presents. One of those times was when I decided to go to college many years after graduating from high school. During my dear wife's university commencement many years ago, I received inspiration to face my fears and begin my college studies at age 25. While facing my fears, I decided to complete a college placement exam. The results of the exam landed me right in the lowest level of college math courses. This discouraged me and empowered good old fear, but I was not done just yet. While looking at my situation and striving to remain determined, I eventually decided the only way to get through this is to just move forward course by course. After many prayers and remaining determined, my new journey resulted in successfully completing not one, but surprisingly two Associate of Science degrees within two years, due to the correlation between the type of courses completed and credit hours earned. I was excited and grateful to God for this blessing and to my wife for her example.

As the years went by, I struggled with the idea of going back to college to earn a Bachelor of Science degree. You may be thinking what... why? Let me explain. Due to troubling difficulties caused by a disorder I have had since childhood, I felt I was not ready to navigate what it takes to earn a Bachelor of Science degree. Fear reared its head again. Once I decided to face my fears, I began researching the options various universities had to offer. One uplifting day, I discovered the University of Management and Technology. As I read about this great institution, I became more interested and inspired. I felt more empowered to move forward. I finally found what I spent many years searching

for. This university was the right fit for me. The University of Management and Technology offers its students many useful program completion options that aid in effectively addressing the many types of potentially hindering circumstances we all face as adults. The university also provides knowledgeable, caring, and supportive faculty and staff members who do a great job providing an outstanding and effective educational and professional development environment.

As I remained determined to complete my studies, I found myself being blessed again with many successes along the way toward completing not only a Bachelor of Science degree, but ultimately a Master of Science degree as well. This has been another exciting and liberating success story about achieving what was available and waiting to be achieved on the other side of fear. This university's faculty and staff and its programs, God's blessings, my family and friends' support, and my efforts made it all possible.

I can look out among all of you today, my fellow graduates, and see that many of you have done the same thing. You overcame your trials, struggles, fears, and various sets of circumstances to achieve your success story as well. We made it! We all found our desired successful paths! Now, as we move forward in life, we can look back and know that we were successful in facing our fears and that we can continue to face our fears and say, not today. I am in control. I will be successful. May we go forward in peace, prosperity, and many great things to come for us and our loved ones.