

Acclaimed Actor Shares Lessons Learned with AU's December Graduates

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Alfred, NY -- An actor who finds roles harder and harder to come by learns some tough lessons, but Robert Forster has mastered them and now shares those lessons with others. On Sunday, his stage was McLane Center, and his audience was the 135 Alfred University degree candidates, their family and friends, gathered for the mid-year commencement. A Rochester native, Forster returned to AU, where he had spent three semesters as a student in 1960 and 1961, to deliver the commencement address and to receive a Doctor of Humane Letters degree, *honoris causa*. Forster likes to tell people he's had a "five-year, ascending first act, followed by a 25-year descending second act." Today, though, Forster's back on top, following his nomination for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role as Max Cherry in Quentin Tarentino's "Jackie Brown." During those years when acting jobs were few, Forster developed what he calls his three-step program for success, based on the lessons life has taught him, and those are what he shared with the December graduates. By following the three steps, he said, "you gain self-respect, the respect of others and satisfaction." The first step in his plan is to "develop a good attitude, to accept all things." As an actor, out of work, it is easy to get discouraged, he admitted, but he developed the philosophy, "No matter what happens, put it behind you and go on. You don't get the job. She doesn't love you anymore. Doesn't matter. Put it behind you and go on." The second step, and the strategy for getting to the third step, is to "deliver excellence now." For an actor, there's no other way, said Forster. "All you have is now. You have to deliver excellence now. You can't play back a tape and say, 'This is the way I wanted to do it.' Now is the only moment you have control over." The third step: Never quit. "You can win the game in the late innings, but only if you stay in the game," Forster said. "And the way you stay in the game until the late innings is to deliver excellence now in all that you do." It's a program that's worked well for him, Forster said. From the day he was nominated for the Academy Award, he's had all the work he can handle, including six or seven small roles and then his current project: "All the Rage," directed by Jim Stein, which he describes as excellent. The nomination for an Academy Award "helped me deliver my potential," said Forster, and the same can be said for his honorary degree. "This will also help me deliver my potential," he assured President Edward G. Coll, Jr. "I will make as much of it as I can."