

ADDRESS TO SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY GRADUATION

As the graduates walked across the stage with their new certificates I reflected that it was 48 years ago that I walked across a similar stage at Melbourne University. Apart from momentarily feeling very old I also recalled how proud my parents and then fiancée (now my wife) were on the occasion of my graduation. I can also recall my then fiancée commenting how she was not impressed by the long speech of the guest speaker. She reminded me of this as she dropped me off a little while ago. However there is no need to worry, I have a date with history this afternoon when the Gold Coast suns win back to back games for the first time since their inception.

As a past fellow graduate, father of three graduate daughters and past Dean of a University Faculty I understand the feelings of most of you in the auditorium. I also feel qualified to congratulate each and every one of the graduates on their achievements. You are entitled to have a sense of satisfaction, contentment and personal pride. However I ask you to stop for a moment and think of your family and friends here today to witness your graduation, recognize their pride and also recognize their contribution over many years. Remember those occasions when they stood by you when you worried prior to an exam, worried after the exam and needed their financial support.

Also recognize the contribution of Southern Cross University and the need to remain associated with the University in the future and to represent it positively in the community through future years. I urge you all to become active members of your various professional bodies that you are now entitled to join.

Importantly understand what it means to be a graduate:

What it is!

- A basis for personal pride and sense of satisfaction
- An indicator of your inherent abilities and IQ
- An indicator of work ethic and determination to succeed
- An indicator of your professional readiness
- A “union ticket” for workplace entry
- A certificate that comes with a set of expectations

What it is not!

- A certificate of superiority
- An end of your formal study obligations
- A gold pass for automatic success
- An indicator of your capacity to lead
- A guarantee for future wealth

So what can you expect next?

Remember the closest to perfection a person ever comes to is when they fill out a job application form, so be realistic in your expectations. My advice is to carefully consider your options and do not feel constrained by the specific disciplines within your degrees.

Understand from the outset that your future is not defined by the narrow boundaries of your degree or study programme. Nursing graduates will not necessarily interact with patients and their future careers may not necessarily be within the Health sector, accountants may never prepare tax returns or end of year financial statements and not all lawyers work in mainstream law. At Gold Coast Health the Chief Executive's first degree was in zoology, the director of Governance has a law degree and I have a B. Comm and MBA with no background in health.

Once you enter the workforce you will progressively appreciate that your "union ticket" for entry does not take you into a narrow corridor but rather into a foyer from which many alternative passages will open a variety of opportunities and provide choice.

As Confucius says, "Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life."

Sitting here today in your cap and gown you no doubt have aspirations to lead. I encourage you to embrace such aspirations and to seize leadership opportunities from the outset. One of your biggest challenges will be to build the personal capacity and courage to lead. This means you have to expend effort.

Remember management and leadership is not about getting other people to do all the work!

Understand personal challenges are significant for leaders, frequently involving a level of personal discomfort. Leadership involves;

- Training of staff and colleagues
- Counselling
- Assessing
- Reprimanding
- Dismissing

Some of you will excel, others will be uncomfortable. Those in the latter group will need to assess their appetite for discomfort. It is not a failure to accept that you may not wish to lead from the front. However do not abandon leadership aspirations too quickly, remember leaders are made, not born. Leaders are made by hard effort which is the price all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile.

Also bear in mind that in climbing the leadership ladder there are some home truths that should be at the forefront of your mind, particularly that people like to be led, not commanded.

Leaders must also bear in mind that they must work with and through others. In the early years of your new careers you will find yourselves in situations where you will see the need to change but you will not have the authority to initiate such change. You must be patient, understanding of the seniority of others yet have the strength to pursue your ideas through thoughtful contribution and influence. This will be respected if you respect others.

As Confucius says, "A man should not worry that other people do not recognise his merits. He should only worry that he failed to recognise the merits of other people"

An early challenge for you will be entering jobs as fresh faced graduates, confident in your own abilities yet asked to settle into positions encumbered with old, obsolete ideas that no longer work in environments that demand cutting edge thinking.

These outmoded habits are the Sacred Cows of many organisations. They trample creative, innovative ideas yet many organisations continue to worship their sacred cows. They are afraid to abandon what once made them successful and will extract a heavy fine from those cow hunters who would "pasture-ise" them.

Despite the inevitability of these challenges go into your careers with "change-Ready Thinking". Conventional wisdom would suggest that you think like a beginner, not an expert and be smart, ask stupid questions. Beginners have open minds and see with the "fresh eyes" of people free of preconceived thinking.