

Occasional address: May 10, 2014.

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, members of the academic procession, guests, graduates and family. What a wonderful May morning! It is a privilege to stand here this morning and address you.

I would now like to address our new graduates specifically, together with your family and friends. It is your day, today, and it is our role to acknowledge your effort and your success in achieving what for some of you is a very personal story. Where against the odds, and perhaps with little support, more than one of you has achieved their goal. For others, it may be the launching pad into further study on your individual career path. There are also amongst us, those whom we now acknowledge as expert in their field having been awarded their PhD. This is no mere effort. I would regard this as a lifetime achievement award.

However, all of you, today have jumped another hurdle in your life, which propels you on the trajectory which you are carefully mapping and currently navigating through life.

Despite the different degrees which each of you will take away today, the one common theme that I can see is that of “**caring**”. Whether it be nursing, osteopathy, or environmental science, we all here today, care about the future health of individuals or the health of our environment, which directly affects our ability to function as a community. This is a theme that I will return to.

How wonderful to have attended a Regional University. Southern Cross University is a modern university. It is a reflection of the variety of peoples in the place where it lives. It reflects the values held by those communities. SCU actively contributes to life in a regional centre, it permeates through our cities

and villages. The advantage to those of us working and living outside this environment is the youthful enthusiasm of students in our towns and young graduates working alongside us. This invigorates us all to our mutual benefit. Because of its young age, SCU's structure is less rigid, its boundaries less defined. This allows its students and graduates to be less constrained, more free to probe the boundaries, to imagine, to explore, to dream and to create.

My Daughter is a current student here and my nephew a first year graduate.

I have always regarded the profession of medicine as a vocation. Even in the modern world, it is still about the prevention and relief of suffering. It is one of the "caring" professions.

Let me tell you something of myself. I am a surgeon. The greatest joy in my working life comes from my contact with people at often critical points in their life. It is a privilege to share in the lives of others and to observe, be a part of and to learn from the decisions that we are sometimes forced to make. My admiration for the human capacity to cope is enormous.

Five years ago, my older brother called me and after a lifetime of working as a company accountant, sought my advice because within in him still, he maintained a desire to become a part of the caring profession of nursing. He graduated three years later from Sydney University in the same cohort as my daughter. There is a 40 year generational gap between the two of them. Both of them are enjoying their work.

As I listen and observe you, as individuals, passing across the podium, it is not hard to see that each of you will become effective members of your chosen communities and more importantly educated contributors to the life and well-being of others. This is an immensely satisfying way to live your life.

It is not all about selflessness. In all of us there is still that need to have a fulfilling life. I would argue, however, that it is by caring for others, by understanding and caring for our environment and by contributing to community that we can achieve that fulfilment.

The career that you have chosen by completing your studies means that you will naturally make a **difference**. But, do not be afraid to be **different**.

You will be asked to make decisions and choices. **Do not mark time**. Make those decisions and move on. Life is short!

If you are fortunate enough, you will work with people. It is from others that we learn, we don't necessarily have to make the same mistakes ourselves.

Embrace diversity, it will have its abundant gifts, and be tolerant of the decisions and choices of others, but always, always be true to yourself.

Life is not about **accumulation**. That is the function of a museum.

It is, however about **security**. You need to feel secure in your body, your health and your life. You need the security and sustenance of family and friends _ and you must contribute to building that security.

Physical Activity! Let's talk about walking, running and jumping. I understand also there is great joy in dancing, sometimes even more so in dancing alone.

I will now recite a poem by **Robert Frost**, the American born, Pulitzer prize winning poet who spoke at John F Kennedy's Inauguration, 53 years ago. It is one of a number of favourites of mine. This was penned 100 years ago and is still and will always be relevant to our lives.

'The Road not taken'.

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

There is real meaning in that poem, about choices and direction, probing and exploration, opportunities and regret, but the essence is in the walking. One must walk the path.

Do not be afraid to make those choices. Be inquisitive, explore, ask questions and dare to be different. You have studied to gain the knowledge and now you will gain the experience to do the job. Next, **you must do it well**. This will bring its own rewards.

I congratulate you all and especially those of you here today who have encouraged an individual graduate to strive and to succeed. This is not the pole vault, it is not **the culmination**. It is not about how high one jumps.....

So, where should we look for **inspiration**? It is all around us, we just need to recognise it!

I am inspired by Sally Pearson, Gold Medal winner at the London Olympics in the women's hurdles, a delightful young woman. As the Governor General said when awarding her the OAM last week, "Your excited exuberance in victory is matched only by the bond you share with those fierce rivals who were your competitors". Today is just the first or second hurdle. The others will be jumped in turn. Even though the length of the track and the number of hurdles is unknown, keep nothing in reserve. *We won't know* when we have jumped the last hurdle. I am not at all sure that it helps to look back.

I wish you well on your journey, do be **adventurous**, be a **contributor**. Enjoy the challenge and take some time to smell the roses. **Good Luck.**