

Occasional Address

Southern Cross University

Coffs Harbour Campus

23 March 2013

The Chancellor, The Honourable John Dowd AO QC, Deputy Chancellor, Mr Trevor Wilson, Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Lee FTSE, university staff, graduates and their families and friends.

I would like to acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr nation on whose land we meet today and pay my respects to elders both past and present and indeed extend that respect to Aboriginal people present and people from all nations.

Congratulations to all the graduates on your achievements.

I believe it would be prudent for me to deliver this Occasional Address by recognising that you the students sitting in front of me have completed your studies and you are about to embark on a professional working life in technology, business, education, the law, the media and the like but I don't believe that is the case. It may not come as a surprise but when you have been in education as long as I have you develop some very strong opinions about learning. I am here to share with you what I believe to be the real responsibility you have to yourself, your peers and colleagues and the global community as a lifelong learner. This is just the next phase in your journey.

Through your university course you have developed a core of academic content knowledge, and through this experience you are able to see the relevance of your learning and I hope for many of you have developed a love of learning that will ensure you remain a lifelong learner seeing this phase of your education as a stepping stone to further learning. Young people must have a depth of core content knowledge, deep learning and genuine understanding of subject matter and the ability to use, critique and apply it appropriately is the foundation.

Since I started in education in the schools I have worked I've watched over 1000 enthusiastic and mostly happy students just like you enter kindergarten and approximately 50% of those students on my watch as principal. In Coffs Harbour alone in 2013 over 600 students have started their first formal education in Kindergarten.

Today's kindergarteners will be retiring in the year 2067. We have no idea of what the world will look in five years, much less 60 years, yet we are charged with preparing our students for life in that world. Our students are facing many emerging issues such as global warming, famine, poverty, health issues, a global population explosion and other environmental and social issues. These issues lead to a need for students to be able to communicate, function and create change personally, socially, economically and politically on local, national and global levels.

Well that is what the research tells us is a 21st century learner.

We have to think differently. I may have acted otherwise if I knew then that students such as each one of you and the students in primary and secondary classrooms needed to be able to access information globally available, work collaboratively, apply innovative solutions to problems and be inspired to learn more.

I have high expectations of each and every one of you. So what do you need to do for yourself?

- Be confident to know you can learn as part of a group and on their own
- Practice your ability to solve problems both as individuals and collaboratively as part of a team
- Keep building your capacity to analyse what they see and hear, and know the difference between fact and myth
- Confidently use technology as a tool to enhance communication, learning and the quality of life
- Communicate and express ideas in a clear and rational way
- Work within your circle of influence and don't let the circle of concern rob you of your time. Over the years I have been influenced by the work of Stephen Covey about being highly effective and this concept has helped me tremendously.
- Covey also taught me to put first things first so I ask you to decide what is important and build the important things into everyday life.
- And above all be passionate in everything you do

In doing all these things you will need support so find yourself mentors. There are leaders in all the fields and professions that you are entering. Often they will share your passion and provide the advice, direction and skills that are most appropriate for your chosen career.

Additionally along your journey find yourself a coach, that person who will unlock your potential to maximise your own performance. It's more often about helping you to learn rather than teaching you and it is clearly about unleashing your talent.

To take carriage of this responsibility wouldn't be easy but in the words of Viktor Frankl

"When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves."

Secondly, key to all things you do is working collaboratively and you have a responsibility as a new graduate to work with peers and colleagues in a way to enhance learning and problem solving together.

Work at:

- Your interpersonal skills to enable you to relate effectively and appropriately to others
- Actively seeking out opinions that are different from yours.

- Developing your creativity and support others look at the world to be innovative in dealing with challenges.
- Making the most of opportunities
- Maintaining a healthy emotional bank account. The Covey metaphor of an Emotional Bank Account is like a regular bank account where you can make deposits and take withdrawals from the account. When you make consistent deposits, out of your integrity and empathy for others you can build trust. At times when those withdrawals are necessary or unintended than you are still positioned to maintain an important relationship with your peers and colleagues.
- Synergise - have you ever been involved in a discussion where you have experienced a change of heart and you have genuinely come up with a solution that is better than any idea you could have imagined. Be open to the wisdom of the team.
- And above all be passionate in everything you do.

Just this week during discussions with a colleague we discussed how many of our school friends are still in the community where we grew up and being part of this community has only extended with the development sprawl. It is indeed different for their children and my too as a large percentage of my friends have adult children who have lived, been educated and worked in a variety of overseas countries. That's the world you are entering.

You need to be an engaged citizen in your own workplace and beyond in your community and as part of the global community. Part of this is to take responsibility for your own professional learning and value and model opportunities to improve your practice and learn from others. As a natural progress it is about building the capacity of others.

The challenge of today's increasingly complex and global community requires you to utilise your personal responsibility and your responsibility to the team. Thirdly, I challenge you as a lifelong learner to be confident in your ability to develop and apply your ethical values, social responsibility and wellbeing.

As a learner in a complex society I trust that you will contribute by:

- Being aware of the wider world and has a sense of your own role as a world citizen;
- Celebrating diversity
- Being aware and making every effort to understand of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally;
- Fighting for social justice;
- Being active and contributing to the community at a range of levels from local to global;
- Being willing to play a part to make the world a more sustainable place;

- Being responsible for your actions.
- And above all be passionate about everything you do.

We hear a great deal about being a global citizen and it is more than simply knowing that we are citizens of the globe to an acknowledgement of our responsibilities both to each other and to the complex world we live in. I'm a baby boomer who will leave the workforce in a few short years I want to leave my profession knowing that all graduates demonstrate an understanding of the need to tackle injustice and inequality, and have the desire and ability to work actively to do so. It is about how you think and behave. It is an outlook on life, a belief that you can make a difference.

Employers are looking to recruit young people with the knowledge, understandings, skills and values that you have. More importantly you leave university with moral imperative to be able to access information globally available, work collaboratively, apply innovative solutions to problems and to be a lifelong learner. You carry that responsibility personally, to the team and to society.

And one more thing - did you get the message YOU MUST HAVE passion! That feeling of an intense emotion, a compelling feeling, enthusiasm, or desire can drive you through the tough spots, the blockers, the hard times or simply when you've 'lost the plot'. Passion focuses you on the why and allows you the privilege of following your dreams.

Now let's go back to those Kindergarten students that have started school this year. You will be their teacher, their solicitor, their bank manager, their psychologist, their leader of technology, science, research and who knows the possibilities. You are the leaders and you need to live your vision for the future.

In finishing I am aware that many of you have received or will be receiving some gifts and mementos from family and friends to celebrate the receiving of your award today and many may even be about the "tools" of your profession. Some years ago on the graduation of my daughter she received a gift also, a picture book by Dr Seuss "Oh the Places you'll go ..."

I'd like to finish with the wise words of Dr Seuss...

And will you succeed?

Yes! You will, indeed!

(98 and 3 / 4 percent guaranteed.)

KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

So...

be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray

or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea,

you're off to Great Places!

Today is your day!

Your mountain is waiting.

So...get on your way!

Kim Taylor

School Education Director, Coffs Harbour

Department of Education and Communities

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