

Address by Professor Way KUO, President

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Members of the Council, Honorary Graduates, Honourable Guests, Graduates and Colleagues:

It is a wonderful time to be addressing so many of our students, faculty and friends on this great day. I know how important this day is for all of you today and I would like to start by offering each one of you my very best of wishes for the future.

As you may know, graduation day in the US is known as the commencement ceremony. Commencement here means “the start of your life beyond university”, i.e. the commencement of your professional life.

So may I offer some advice at the “commencement” of your new lives? As you begin this next chapter in your lives, I want you to take to heart this thought: challenge yourself. Don’t settle for the easy salary, and certainly don’t choose a career because of the salary. Instead, seek ways to challenge yourself as often as you can.

It is relatively easy to challenge authority in one’s life time. We can challenge our parents in our teenage years by testing the boundaries of parental regulation. We can challenge our teachers with difficult questions, and we can challenge our political leaders by making demands. But how often do we really challenge ourselves?

Our new Discovery-enriched Curriculum is meant to challenge our students by asking them to create new knowledge and communicate that new knowledge to the rest of the world. There is no doubt about it: that is a huge challenge, for the students and also for the faculty and teachers who have to write the course materials and supervise the students’ projects.

My dream is for each and every one of you to carry the flame of discovery and innovation into society and seek ways to be unique, be original and to be challenged. The easy path is often the less rewarding. As one could have said: Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It’s not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it’s a day you’ve had everything to do and you’ve done it.

The second piece of advice is this: get more overseas exposure. Look for any opportunity and go abroad. Why is that? Well, the reason is related to the need to challenge yourself. Life in Hong Kong is very convenient. Some might even say it is not that challenging. But when you are overseas, you need to use different languages, adapt to different customs and work within a variety of social structures. All of that experience will be invaluable when you return to Hong Kong and to the job market. Employers are calling out for recruits who can work in multicultural, multilingual work environments.

Being an international citizen does not mean you have to speak English really well or that you have been on vacation to Hawaii! It means developing an understanding of, and appreciation for, the different ways people around the globe live their lives and conduct business. In today's market place, the recruitment teams at major companies will be very impressed by whatever overseas experience you have taken, and secondly how you have used that exposure to develop your resume.

Whatever paths you take at the end of this ceremony today I wish you all the very best and I will welcome you back in the not-too-distant future to campus as one of our esteemed alumni.

Remember, the most rewarding jobs, and the most interesting people, like the Honorary Doctorates with us today, follow their hearts and have the courage to challenge themselves. I hope you are cut from the same cloth!
