

## Speech Graduation – Mary Patetsos

Thank you Chancellor, Professors, Academic Staff, graduands, families and friends

For a mind to thrive it must always be open to new ideas and it must enjoy the adventures of learning. Today's ceremony is in recognition of your learning experience to date and that you have practiced an open mind. It is also an inflection point capturing what you have gained thus far and a recognition that learning will, in the future take on a different guise for each one of you.

I recall sitting in an audience, not dissimilar to this, 20 years ago. A room filled with relief, anticipation and significant anxiety. A room overflowing with a mixture of emotions. An experience which is always useful.

Today you, indeed all of us, face a National and indeed a Global economy which may not present adequate opportunities. Indeed a globalised world may indeed expect you to embrace change at many levels at a pace yet unknown.

Many of you will need to seek out your best chance of employment. And seek it again...maybe often.

So expect to push yourselves into the workforce rather than the workforce openly embracing you.

On reflection, your capacity to apply knowledge will rely on your maturing into your professions.

It is with this in mind that I think of your situations today and distil my key learnings since my graduation.

In sharing these with you I hope to ignite what for me has been the most critical factor in my education. A willingness to continue to learn. To look up and forward towards the horizon, always recognising the impact that all that I do has on individuals, our local community and the world.

I hope that by shedding light on my experience I can offer a sense of a journey which you may be tempted to share.

So here is my top ten tips, not in any particular order.

Firstly, surround yourself with people who are smarter than you, remain as much as possible a lateral thinker and resist being institutionalised. Ask why and how, and seek to discover solutions and advancement.

Always value innovation and apply yourself to re-invention and re-investment.

Today's resource constraints should challenge us all to re-set our personal challenges. Learn how to use the resources available to us in a more sustainable manner, learn to re-purpose. Recognise that how we

have done it in the past is no longer good enough. An interesting example of this is the challenges we as a society face in the area of child protection. No amount of screening can provide security nor is a legislative response enough. Fundamental to reforms in this area are reviews of practice, ethos and culture. At the core of this is debunking the practice of institutionalisation of the child and of the practitioner.

Secondly, value partnerships with your colleagues and institutional collaborations. Most advanced economies require joint effort in the delivery of projects and programs.

Third, your work will have more meaning if in some way it contributes to the betterment of individuals, our local South Australia Community and beyond.

Also, work to define the “common good” and apply measures in your practice to achieve this. Be mindful that you are refining all that you do so as to curtail harmful conduct.

As a child of migrants it is in my DNA to break new ground and stretch the parameters of what I believe is possible. This is my fifth point.

Exercise entrepreneurship, but always be principled and disciplined. As professionals, you will face ethical, moral and legal challenges. For example, today's public sector will expect of you the greatest probity, transparency and good governance practices.

Government has in place all the mechanisms to achieve these objectives. Despite this environment you will also be expected to be innovative, risk – tolerant and outcomes driven. You will have to rise to these challenges. In fact, you may even actively drive these reforms.

You and I have at our fingertips the power of the internet. Information technology is a tool that when used well adds enormous value to your work. Unlike myself who is an IT emigrant, you are the generation of IT natives. You will be the pioneers of our future, instrumental in discovering new ways.

You will be expected to question what might be possible when access to information is limitless.

Will information technology be a leveller or an enabler?

How much ground will you as professionals forfeit to machines that can process information? Or will such machines empower you.

As manufacturing skills continue to be overtaken by automation, will professional judgement be challenged by systems that can mimic human capacity to think and assess moral and ethical considerations?

Number 8 – is a reminder that we must recognise and embrace diversity in the workplace. Use this diversity to improve both productivity and sustainability.

Different perspectives will drive excellence as we work collaboratively to build on each other's strengths.

9. Imagine yourself as nimble thinkers, as groups of people that build upon intellectual thinking. Be frank and fearless, be mindful.

And finally, a reminder that my education alone does not define me, nor will it you.

Am I a lapsed social worker or a social worker on steroids?

Today, marks a moment in time when we acknowledge your hard work. In recognising your achievements we all realise that as custodians of a University education you are enabled to make a difference. What you make of this is yours to determine.

I encourage you to think ambitiously, informed by both history and your education, to address today's social, economic and political challenges.

Recognise that both the world of ideas (ideology) and the subjective personal, are political, and that in the mix you must have the courage to stick to your convictions as inferred by Martin Luther King Jr who remarked that:

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

You have learnt much and have much to learn. I expect that our paths will cross again and I look forward to it.

Importantly, I trust that the future holds opportunities for you all and that you thrive.

Congratulations and

Thank you