

ADDRESS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
GRADUATING CLASS OF 2006

Professor Denise Bradley, Vice Chancellor, Ms Alice McCleary, Deputy Chancellor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Congratulations to all of our graduands. It is a great privilege to be addressing you today at this very significant event which, for many of you, will be the culmination of years of intense study and personal sacrifice.

To have completed your studies at the University of South Australia is an outstanding achievement. It reflects positively on you and your dedication to obtaining educational qualifications that will be recognized around the world.

It also reflects on your determination and commitment to follow your dreams.

As someone who left home at the age of 16 to study abroad, I know only too well the challenges some of you faced when you arrived in a foreign country, with no family contacts or established friendships.

For me and many migrants, Australia has been a land of opportunity. And indeed I hope that your experience at university has been a life-changing one.

Up to 40% of all skilled migrants to Australia once studied here as international students. And I was one of them.

I was born and raised in America, and still remember my father's often-repeated words ... anyone can become President of the United States.

Unfortunately though, the claim just isn't true. You can't be president of the United States, for example, if you were born outside the country. You are also highly unlikely to become president if you are a woman – although movies and television programs featuring female presidents rate very well. Apparently, it's also very difficult to become President if you are born in a poor or disadvantaged State, are not Caucasian and do not have access to vast sums of money to mount a campaign.

Australia, too, is yet to have a female Prime Minister. But we have had female Premiers, Lord Mayors and Governors ... and a record 45% of the South Australian Government's new House of Assembly team are women. Five of them are Ministers and at least one of them I know is a migrant.

One of South Australia's most successful recent migrants, though, is Premier Mike Rann who was born in the UK and migrated to South Australia from New Zealand.

And just to continue the theme of Australia being the land of opportunity ... limited only by your capacity to imagine the future ... the head of this esteemed University, Professor Denise Bradley was named South Australian of the year in recognition of her outstanding contribution to education.

But today we are here to recognize you ... and your contribution to education as the University of South Australia's graduating class of 2006.

You are the very people nations will vie for in the future. You have made a substantial investment in your future and it will pay dividends.

You have lived in a culture and environment that is radically different to the experiences that you might have had at home. You have developed professional as well as personal abilities that will be of critical importance in the future. You have come not only for a world-class degree but to get ready for your role in the global economy.

And to those graduands who were born and educated in Australia – you have had the opportunity to work with students from different cultures, to gain important insights and develop significant relationships.

Doing business in China or India or across Asia should be easier because of your international ties at UniSA.

In my experience, the ability to interact with people from different cultures is of fundamental importance ... both personally and professionally.

Many multinational corporations regularly rotate their executives to see how well they manage in different environments. The ability to relate to and work with individuals from many different cultures is arguably becoming even more important than a degree from a leading institution.

With your experience at UniSA you have both.

The University of South Australia is a young university with a distinguished history of international engagement and a bright promise for the future.

The university will this year be home to more than 4,000 international students from nearly 90 countries. In addition, university staff teach 7,000 students in eight other countries.

And by obtaining a degree from UniSA, you become members of a prestigious alumni group which includes the head of a billion-dollar home finance company ... an Olympic gold medalist ... several directors of building and construction companies ... people who helped engineer the Adelaide to Darwin rail link – the longest continuous North-South railway anywhere in the world ... and the heads of a number of government departments.

Perhaps one of these careers will capture your imagination ... or perhaps three ... because research shows that most people your age will have three to five separate and distinct careers in their lifetime.

I myself have already had four ... political lobbyist ... journalist ... marketer and now Chief Executive.

I've done jobs as varied as:

- Working for an extraordinary Senator who never forgot that she stood for Parliament because she wanted to improve the lives of ordinary women.

- Broadcasting South Australian-born and educated astronaut Andy Thomas' first space voyage live from countdown in Cape Canaveral to his flight over Adelaide.
- Selling the Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive to a group of cynical, hard-bitten New York journalists and later seeing them leave the Outback with tears in their eyes.

And it is now my privilege to lead the team marketing Adelaide as Australia's best place to study.

The common thread in all of my careers is communication ... and it was my experience as an international student that had the greatest impact on my communication skills.

Your experience as an international student (or indeed a student studying with international students) has enabled you to form relationships, partnerships and alliances that could last a lifetime.

And I hope it has also opened your eyes to the massive potential of working and doing business here in South Australia. Because opportunities abound ...

- \$26 billion has been invested in current major construction projects.
- The mining industry is booming – and will only move forward under the State Government's \$22 million dollar plan to accelerate exploration.
- We also have a brand new, state-of-the-art international airport in Adelaide
- And remain the hub of the nation's wine industry – accounting for 70 per cent of Australia's wine exports.

Adelaide has long been the defence capital of Australia. (A fact reinforced by the Australian Navy's recent decision to build three Air Warfare Destroyers at Port Adelaide.)

And South Australia accounts for 20 per cent of the nation's electronic design and manufacturing activity.

So you see there is tremendous potential here for those of you who choose to stay on and make South Australia your home.

We wish you the best for the future and hope that your university experience will help you to secure rewarding and stimulating jobs – here in South Australia, in your home country or in another part of the world.

You are among the best and the brightest of your generation and we will share your success and proudly follow your careers and achievements.

Thank you for choosing to study at the University of South Australia. Everyone here – and all your friends and colleagues in South Australia - trust you will fondly recall your experiences.