

UniSA Graduation Speech
10.30 am Tuesday 18 March 2014

Your Excellency, Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce, Governor of South Australia;

Mr Terry Evans Pro Chancellor;

Professor David Lloyd, Vice Chancellor of the University;

Other distinguished guests;

Most importantly, graduating students, your families and friends.

Thank you for the privilege of being part of this graduation ceremony with you.

I too wish to offer my sincere congratulations to each of you who is celebrating today.

Graduating with a university degree is an important milestone in one's personal and professional life.

Your degree is respected as a significant level of educational attainment in the eyes of our community and also by the international community.

In many instances your degree provides a qualification to enter or progress in a profession. It demonstrates your possession of the knowledge and skills that are valued and are central to that profession.

It is also testament to the personal qualities of your success – your hard work, your perseverance, your resilience, juggling the demands of study with the need to support yourself financially, and not forgetting the skills of occasional panic management.

Congratulations on what you have achieved and for what it signifies.

Today you are graduating with degrees in art, architecture, design and education.

Your studies have strengthened your ability to think critically, to create, to innovate.

Your studies share the affirmation that human experience can be made better.

Of course you already know this by being here now.

What you may not yet know is exactly where your knowledge and expertise will lead you in the next stage of your lives.

Your degrees open many professional pathways for you.

However there are no certainties about how you will enter and how you might continue in these professions.

That is the nature of work and the workforce these days.

People are far less likely to start and follow single employment pathways in today's work environment.

We know today's employment pathways are diverse, flexible and continually changing.

So how can you best navigate your own way in this environment and maximise your chances of being successful?

I want to leave you with three strategies that I have found most help people move into and succeed in their chosen profession.

The first one is this - keep on engaging with your field of expertise. Completing your degree is just a beginning.

Keep reading about developments in the areas you are passionate about. Subscribe to journals, join on-line forums. Know about current issues, the new developments, the key changes.

But don't just find out what is happening - understand why it is happening, why it is important, what it means.

Don't just float over the surface, dive deeply into what really matters in your chosen profession.

Ask good questions and the answers will take you further.

Keep learning, keep growing.

The second strategy is to engage with others who are passionate about your profession. They may be a friend, a work colleague, someone in a position of responsibility in your profession.

It should be someone who is doing more than just the job – a person who cares about its outcomes, who believes it is making a difference, who is always looking to improve what they do and how they do it .

At the right time you may ask a person with the right experience to act as a mentor – that is someone who will meet with you on a regular basis over a period of time to share with you their ideas and expertise. To help you understand what you know you do not yet know.

It should be someone whom you trust. Someone whom you respect and who is also respected by others in the profession.

I have had the benefit of having good mentors over many years. They have been at the centre of my most valuable professional learning.

The third strategy is more a principle than a strategy – and it is to always remember your studies give you opportunities that many others do not have.

Never take these opportunities for granted.

Media reports regularly show us people in today's world who never have the chance to gain the education you now gained, who are attacked for just daring to want an education.

What is most important is how you use the opportunities you now have.

Always act with the awareness your studies give you the capacity to make a difference.

They open up opportunities for you to *use* your knowledge, understanding and skills to contribute to the lives of other people –

- to shape how we engage with our creative, social and physical environments;
- to influence how we interact with others;
- to lead us into new insights of ourselves.

I have found the most successful professionals act with the intention to make a difference. They have a restlessness for things to be better.

So what does all this mean for you as you move into the next stage of your professional life?

Over the years one of my responsibilities has been to appoint people to employment positions: people who were new recruits; or who were looking for new opportunities; or who wished to take a leading role in their profession.

I continually found that when I was reading their resumes and interviewing them, they were communicating more than what they had done or the level of their knowledge.

Underneath all the information, they were in reality conveying what they were like as learners and as people.

As a learner - what they were like as a thinker, a problem solver, a communicator, their ability to work with others, their capacity to be flexible and responsive.

And as a person - how they respected others, how they valued differences in people and in their beliefs, how they dealt with conflict, their commitment to ethical behaviour.

It was these qualities - as well as their knowledge and skills - that influenced who was finally selected for the position.

Whatever the next step in your professional life – whether it goes to plan or doesn't go exactly to plan - see it as the chance to deepen your experience and grow as a learner and as a person.

Experience is what you gain when you haven't yet gained it.

The best advice I can give you is make the most of the opportunities your degree creates for you.

Embrace your profession; learn from others; make a difference.

Congratulations on your success.

I wish you well for the future success that you are about to make happen.

Thank you.

Dr Paul Kilvert