

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Fellow Honorary Graduands, Fellow Graduands , Senior University Officials, Parents and Friends it is an honour for me to be here today.

Graduates, may I offer my congratulations to you on your graduation and well done to your families and professors for their support, encouragement and teaching.

Today is a celebration of your achievements and allows you a brief moment to draw breath before you forge on. You will have to choose which path you will follow. You have to weigh up the benefits to yourselves, your loved ones and the benefit to others.

You might be expecting me to talk about how to succeed in business and to make use of words like ‘focussed’ or ‘hardworking’ or ruthless’ or ‘far-sighted’ but instead I can offer the following advice:

- We can start by limiting our use of ‘always’ and ‘nevers’.
- Keep your eyes open to opportunities and keep your mouth shut on things you don’t know.
- Although you are smart, you can still say ‘I don’t know’ or ‘Let me get back to you.’
- Be Nice People!’ Be nice to your parents, your customers, your colleagues and your enemies. That quality will account for 50% of your success.

You only have to turn on the TV today to see why I offer this advice. We've got politicians calling each other all sorts of unflattering names and media who tend to play up every hint of conflict. Anyone interested in getting coverage feels compelled to make the most outrageous comments.

When you leave here today, you will search for work in an economy that is still emerging from the worst crisis since the Great Depression. You live in a century where the speed with which jobs and industries move across the globe is forcing South Africans to compete like never before. You will raise your children at a time when threats like terrorism and climate change aren't confined within the borders of any one country. There are no boundaries to finding information. And as our world grows smaller and more connected, you will live and work with more people who don't look like you or think like you or come from where you do. That is true of every country of the world.

The point is, business has never been for the faint-of-heart, and if you enter this arena, you should expect to get roughed up and not expect to be treated fairly. There is nothing fair in losing your job not because you have failed to meet the minimum standard but because the company you work for has been taken over!

I also urge you not to set out just to make money, as this leads to short-lived pleasures. Instead, aim to succeed to the very best of your abilities in whatever it is that you set out to achieve and the best way to do this is to do something which you enjoy. You want to look forward to getting up in the mornings and going to work.

So, on a personal level, you have choices. How will your decision impact on this country's future?

In 2000, at the beginning of the new millennium, South Africa's then President Thabo Mbeki claimed that the Twenty-First century would belong to Africa. The World Bank's response was "Yes, Africa can claim the new century ... but this would be "conditional on Africa's ability to

overcome the development traps that kept it confined to a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, conflict, and untold human suffering for most of the 20th century.”

This may be easier said than done! Democracy in a country with more than fifty million people with 29 different languages and many different religious groups, is inherently difficult. Democracy has always been noisy and messy; contentious and complicated process. On a basic level, South Africans have always grappled with the meaning of individual freedom and equality.

We can and should debate what the role of government is in our lives and what our rights and duties are as citizens. Remember that Cicero said every right has an equal duty. A right without a duty is a privilege!

We like to criticise government, but remember Aristotle’s warning – you will always get the government you deserve. We all participate in government – we are the people

- who vote them in;
- who provide the education,
- the health care,
- the infrastructure.

It is therefore our responsibility, every one of us, to choose the best government. It must never be left to the Government to choose the Government! We cannot allow the system of government in South Africa to go back to the dark days of bigoted thinking of ‘White baasmanskap’ or ‘Black baasmanskap’.

Racial preference is wrong. The only basis on which decisions should be made is that of meritocracy, that the best person gets the job.

If Rhodes has educated you, as it did me, to have independence of thought, then I offer the following advice.

You can question someone's views and their judgment without questioning their motives or their patriotism.

Actively seek out information that challenges your assumptions and your beliefs, and then perhaps you can begin to understand where the people who disagree with you are coming from. It may make your blood boil; your mind may not often be changed, but the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship. As was famously said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts."

Don't make quick and easy decisions. 'When the facts change,' said John Maynard Keynes, 'I change my mind. What do you do, sir?'

Do the maths and crunch the numbers. Don't rely on a tossed coin, or only listen to one side of the argument, or slide into your positions by default, on the basis of positions held before.

Be open minded and above all work hard gathering facts before you make a decision. As tomorrow's managers you need to know that you must spend time managing your risk. Avoid those apparent riskless investments because all decisions have risk and as managers, it is the risk you need to manage not the opportunity.

When starting a new venture, choose your partner carefully. You must be able to look into your partner's eyes! When you are scared, hold his or her hand and also do this when you are feeling brave. To peep into the abyss of the unknown on your own is very scary. One always feels braver when you can look around the corner into tomorrow's world holding someone's hand. And the bonus - it is always nice to be able to blame someone when things go wrong and what better person to blame than your partner. But remember that your partner can and probably will do the same to you. That is why you need to be kind and gentle and strong with others.

Please listen to others – and that does not mean you just hear them speak! Put down your mobile phones and look into others faces. It will tell you more than you can imagine. A wise old family friend gave me this advice: – One must see what one's ears hear!

I was recently in Boston watching my son rowing at the Head of the Charles. While walking the streets I noticed an inscription on the City Library building which read: “The Commonwealth requires the education of the people for the safeguard of Order and Liberty”. As graduates, this will be your role: to go out and use the education that you have been given to do this. Make an impact and shape your own destiny because South Africa's future is now in your hands.

Finally, if you are willing to contribute and participate in corporate life with hard work whilst thinking outside the box and embracing the principles of fair play and participate in civic life, then I believe South Africa will succeed as a democracy and that it will continue to prosper. A degree means nothing unless you go out into the community to prove

yourself! It is not your abilities which count, it is the decisions that you make!

Congratulations on your graduation and good luck.