

NMMU Graduation - 9 April 2014

Speech by Chancellor Santie Botha

1. Protocol

2. I would like to begin by congratulating every graduate here today. You have set yourself a difficult goal and you have achieved it. Don't underestimate just how important this is. But this phase is now complete. The next challenge is what you are going to do with your degree. And the new goals that you have to set for yourself again. And what you would like to truly excel in.. My only advice is to set yourself difficult goals and targets again, strive to be the best in the field that you have chosen, keep searching for the new and what is sometimes viewed as the impossible and always believe that you can change the world for the better...don't strive for fame and fortune, but strive to be the best that you can ultimately be.

3. In a specialized field, what is far more important than pure knowledge and far more important than experience is expertise. And not just expertise, but Creative Expertise. Ingenuity actually. Because the creative component is so crucial in today's interconnected world...where it is about finding solutions that make a difference and changes the world for the better...and every day is a new day... with new learnings as well...

4. So, if I ask you, who are your role models today? Who do you admire? Who do you aspire to be like? Or are you still searching? Have some of your role models disappointed you lately? Or frankly, does no-one on this planet impress you enough to be your role model? The challenge therefore is to create your own role model... not the celebrities who are sometimes famous just because they are on reality TV, or sport stars that sometimes let us down...the challenge is to become your own role model and a role model for your peers as well.

5. I once read this book by one of the greatest tennis players that the world has ever seen, Billy Jean King...and in it as she reflected on her life, she spoke about the lessons you learn from sport that you carry with you through your life. In tennis, every ball that comes to you, you have to make a decision. You have to accept responsibility for the consequences every time that you hit the ball. No matter what you look like or how much money you have in the bank, you still have to learn your craft, you have to hit lots of balls, you have to train harder than anyone else, particularly when you are at the very top. Because everyone else wants the top spot as well. There are disciplines of life that you learn from sport. Another thing is that you learn to adapt. When you're playing a major tennis match, you can't say 'stop, I want to start again" You have to accept responsibility for your actions and live with the results and the consequences.

6. Competition today is global and the war for the best talent is intense. Whether you have studied at the NMMU or Harvard or Shanghai University, you must be ready to compete with the best in the world. Because you might end up working for a global or multinational company with offices in New York, New Delhi or Johannesburg. Today it is about problem solvers, creative, out of the box thinkers, entrepreneurs, true innovators. People who question the status quo, irrespective of the discipline that you are in. To always ask the questions and improve on the answers.

7. In Jim Collins's book "From Good to Great" he talks about good being quite a formidable enemy of Great. Because good is 'not bad', good is ok, good is fine, good is not too shabby, good is pleasing, good is satisfactory. It is indeed very easy to settle for good. Because to be great takes extra effort and is often a leap of faith. It is also sometimes far easier said than done But once you have crafted your plan for greatness, it is about never losing faith, irrespective of the obstacles and naysayers, of establishing a culture of discipline with disciplined people around you, disciplined thought and action and using technology to it's maximum advantage. Turning something from good to great never happens in one foul

swoop, it is a process of many interventions but always with a clear end goal in mind. It is also about Greatness being a choice. We must choose Greatness over mediocrity.

8. This year the NMMU will celebrate over 6000 degrees and diplomas, including 427 masters degrees and 72 doctorates which is a formidable achievement, once again.. This is the only university in the world that carries the name of the first all inclusive democratic president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela. A global icon of the 21st century who was born in the Eastern Cape. A name that needs no explanation wherever you are in the world. And with that name also comes a huge responsibility to live up to what that name represents for anyone who has been touched and studied at this university.

9. I think it is therefore apt to end with a few words from Mr Nelson Mandela, and I quote... 'A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination. There are very few misfortunes in this world that you cannot turn into a personal triumph if you have the iron will and the necessary skill. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another'.

10. I can assure you that wherever you might end up working in the world one day, you will never have to explain where the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is situated or which country you are from.

And remember your Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of Choice. Your choice.

Ndiyabulela Nangomso.