

Deputy Chancellor, members of the University, fellow graduates and guests. It's my very great honour and privilege to stand here representing my fellow graduates and to have the opportunity to thank Macquarie University - the professors, lecturers, tutors and administrative staff - for guiding us through the last few years along the path to graduation.

My first association with Macquarie University was in the crèche while my mother pursued her studies here - indeed, in the very same faculty. When I started my degree a few years ago, I looked at it as a mere progression of my education, to acquire the skills necessary to become an accountant - graduating as a Bachelor of Commerce. But I've gained much more from Macquarie: the ability to think critically and apply theory in practical circumstances and, most importantly, to have a broader perception of the world and its different cultures.

I'm sure that I speak for all my fellow graduates in saying that we feel various emotions today: mainly joy, pride, gratitude and relief, of course, but also sadness at the parting of our ways. I'm sure, however, that the wonderful friendships that I've made here will endure.

It isn't possible to succeed at university without the support of our beloved families. You gave us financial help and a peaceful place to study. You encouraged us when we felt weighed down by a seemingly impossible workload. Thank you sincerely for your love and understanding.

Thanks are also due to the academic and general university staff for your professionalism and commitment to ensuring our ultimate success. We were inspired by your scholarship, love of learning and pursuit of excellence.

Macquarie is recognised internationally for its top-quality teaching and research - it's a place where our minds were challenged, broadened and steered away from ignorance and prejudice. A place where we started to discover who we really are and what our potential is! Perhaps it's true, as the English philosopher Herbert Spencer said, that "education has for its object the formation of character."

Our character is formed from discovering that others may have better answers; our character comes from mixing with people from diverse ethnic cultures, religions and philosophies, and developing from these encounters true tolerance and acceptance of others.

Furthermore, university gave us the freedom to discover ourselves and what we wanted to achieve in life. It was an experience on so many levels. It was more than just the degrees, courses, exams and grades, but rather the experiences we went through with other students. Being part of a sports team, meeting people with similar interests in a university club, having a drink at the uni bar, and chatting with friends while sitting on the grass

between lectures. Conception Day, the gym, snow trips to Thredbo, simply grabbing a latte from a coffee cart. These are the things that are character-building and make the university experience so special.

We don't know it all; our time at Macquarie has shown us that there's so much more for us to learn. We must continue to question "Why?" but, more importantly, we must ask "What if?" and "Why not?"

May I conclude by offering my congratulations to all graduates, and I wish you good luck with your careers and, in some cases, further studies. And again, to all who've supported us on the journey that has culminated in this happy day, I say a sincere thank you.