

2017 Occasional Address – Mark Duggan

Chancellor Acting Vice-Chancellor Distinguished Guests
Colleagues, Graduates and Family and friends of the 2017
Graduates

I acknowledge the Ngunnawal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land upon which Parliament House sits and believe that it is important that we recognise the importance of observing and recognising the Ngunnawal peoples as the traditional custodians of this land a events being held at Parliament House and the University of Canberra.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the 2017 Occasional address. I am sure many a guest speaker before me has stated this is my first graduation speech and as I will tell you in a moment, I did not graduate from university, so this may be something of a departure from tradition.

But as I have experienced so many times before, when an opportunity presents itself to help celebrate your success, and for me to take on a new personal challenge I am glad to take it. So my thanks to the organisers for inviting me to address you today.

When I was invited to deliver this speech, I was asked to share my life's journey, my experience and any insights gained with your interests and future endeavours in mind.

If there has been one theme more than any other that has influenced that journey to date it has been "opportunity". It is fair to say that I have lived a somewhat unconventional life to date.

I spent much of my junior years being a patient in the health system, having had more than 50 surgeries thus far! and

despite the amazing effort of my family and our wonderful health system that experience does have an impact on how I viewed the world.

Like many people now in their early 50's or older at the age of 15 or 16 I had a choice to make, continue through to year 12 and then higher education (to become a nurse) or take up an apprenticeship in a trade that I was really interested in as a motor mechanic. I was in two minds, having being influenced by many wonderful health professionals in my life the calling was strong however my passion for anything with an engine and my want to get out and experience the world led me to take up an apprenticeship as a mechanic. So I left school to pursue my dream.

The ensuing years of ongoing health issues made a career as a tradesman more and more difficult, but gladly I chose to see this challenge as an opportunity. But opportunities are not like prizes to be collected; one must be able to make the most of these "opportunities" when they present themselves.

After a number of interesting jobs and experiences I now fast forward 10 years where I found myself, a fully qualified motor mechanic, entering the health sector for the first time working for a multi-national pharmaceutical company as a sales rep promoting pharmaceuticals. Money was good, the role was not difficult. I can talk about anything if I have the right information but I still needed more. Like many things I had dabbled in prior to this role I was restless. This was despite being the first pharmaceutical sales rep to be employed without a year 12 certificate and one of only a few who did not have a science degree.

Instead of seeing a dead end, I looked for an "opportunity", and sure enough one came knocking that looked like it might provide the "more" I needed.

My sales director asked me to spend a day with one of our senior directors and board members to show him what a day in the life of a pharmaceutical sales representative looked like. This was an “opportunity” too good to refuse as I had been thinking about how I could branch out and find a more challenging role within the company that I enjoyed working for. During the day I spent with this director we discussed many topics but one topic that we kept returning to was how the organisation we worked for needed to adapt to meet changing times and an increasingly competitive market place. So seeing a chance, and while sitting in a bar waiting for our hamburgers to arrive for lunch, and never having pitched an idea to a director before, I proposed an idea to him.

In short, the concept was to develop an electronic messaging project for the delivery of medical records between afterhours GP providers (CALMS) and GP’s in the ACT. Seeing an opportunity developing before me I confidently advised that I had the ability to engage our customers (GP’s) & the afterhours provider and I had an idea of what the technology solution could be. I shared my vision for this project and outlined that this would be a unique mechanism to engage with our customers while also solving a significant patient care issue. I advised that this would be one of those “opportunities” where the big bad pharma would give back to the health community whilst simultaneously improving their engagement with GPs’. I explained that this opportunity would be a win-win.

The director asked me what it would take to get going. A week later I was presenting my concept to the Board and a month later I was seconded to develop and deliver the project. Six months later the ACT led the way in delivering one of the country’s first true electronic messaging projects and within 12 months I was given the opportunity to develop a team and have the role of the inaugural National E-Health Business Development Manager for a multi-national pharmaceutical

company and leading a national team of six delivering health projects nationally.

From that one “opportunity” 17 years ago, I now lead a team of amazing health professionals who provide valuable diagnostic imaging services at one of Australia’s finest tertiary hospitals, the Canberra Hospital. I also have the chance to support the training and development of graduates from University of Canberra and to support better health outcomes for patients.

During my professional career I have understood the importance of keeping your eye on the horizon, having an understanding of what skills and talents are transportable and what I have learnt in working in the different sectors.

In maximising opportunities there are a couple of important factors to consider. You need to be resilient, take risks have the courage of your convictions and be passionate and clear about what you want to achieve.

The employment market is much tougher than it used to be but my simple message to you today as you embark on your careers is to be ready for when your “opportunity” presents, be ready for your employer or potential employer to give you an “opportunity”. Always believe in the education and skills that you have learnt in your time at the University of Canberra, but also trust the life experience that you also bring to any moment.

Understand your strengths, seek feedback from line managers and listen to colleagues and patients, their words should offer you pieces of information for reflection and personal development.

Delivering this address today is a huge honour for me and I hope that by sharing my experiences it will assist you in

maximising the opportunities that are presented to you in the future.

Today is about celebrating your achievements. Enjoy the moment! I wish you the very best for the next stage of your journey.

There is no doubt you will encounter challenges, but I hope that you will be ready to turn them into opportunities.

Congratulations and thank you,

Mark Duggan