

Graduating Ceremony Address – C Ingram

Faculty of Business, Government and Law

Thursday 22 April 2021

Good afternoon and thank you for that very warm introduction. It is very much my great honour and privilege to provide the Address at today's Graduation Ceremony for the Faculty of Business, Government and Law.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and graduate on today, those of the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elder's past, present and emerging.

To the Vice Chancellor, members of the Faculty, distinguished guests and most importantly **you the graduating students**, I am thrilled to be part of your Graduation ceremony. Today is one of life's milestones – here with you today are your family, friends and colleague students who have supported and indeed willed you here today – they too are so proud of your achievement and excited for the next chapter of life that awaits you. A big thanks to the amazing support team of family and friends here today.

My connection with the University is multi-faceted. UC has touched my life in many ways over the years indeed it is why I am here in Canberra. So let's go back in time if you will indulge me! My family emigrated from England in 1970 so my father could take up a position as the Senior Economics Lecturer in the fledgling University which had only opened in

1967. I remember coming into ‘work with Dad’ this very modern campus which seemed like it sat on the ‘edge of the world’ – bush, and back then new suburbs, red earth and roads with no houses! An abundance of land supply not quite like the situation Canberra faces today. I too then studied here in 1982 and met my husband here during the infamous stone week celebration but more than that I met myself here – challenges, joy, fear, hope, failure all were unearthed at UC and so you see it is where I deeply connected and looked inside myself and learnt more than accounting, **I learnt about who I was.** Looking back this prepared me more for life, my career and leadership at KPMG more than I could have realised. (2.3mins)

I studied Accounting and lived on Residences – H Top with a view of the car park and the garbage bins! Here I learnt about the importance of **inclusion and diversity** – on our floor we had one of the first Chinese exchange students – Weng , a Papua New Guinean student and exchange students from Rhodesian here to learn teaching and Secretarial studies. It was shared facilities and so learnt how to share, cook and built lifelong friendships quite different from life in Belconnen growing up. Academically I did not have a superhighway experience – I must have thought you had to collect ‘one of everything’ and that I did! I passed units, withdrew from units, failed and got HD for units – including an Australian Computer Society award for programming.

So, whilst I was learning valuable academic content and principles, I was starting to learn about me – how did I learn?

How did I motivate myself when a subject was not ‘my thing’, how did I pick myself up when I failed and I learnt the joy of how can you get lost in time when you are enthralled and loving the discovery of a new concept or knowledge?

No doubt you have all had your very own personal experiences about getting here today and getting to know yourself – these learnings won’t appear on the academic transcript you will receive today. But don’t understate these valuable lessons are a part of who you are – own them with pride and embrace them as they make up part of the authenticity of you. I learnt as much from when things didn’t go well as I did from when things were wildly successfully.

Today you are graduating as the very first **COVID graduates** and you have learnt the second life lesson of **be adaptable** – life doesn’t always progress in a linear path and it is always the left field issue that catches you out. Those who prosper ADAPT. You can’t always control a situation and sometimes life is hard, and you have to lean into the head winds but at the end of the day you have to **adapt**. This COVID lesson this will stand you in good stead for your careers, take this with you.

You have also witnessed some of the unique mega trends in the world over your time at UC and during COVID. My third piece of life advice is **context is everything** – be a ***Hawk before you are a Hedgehog*** (English phrase) or in Australia we would say be an ***Eagle before you are an Echidna!*** See the bigger picture and the landscape before you are down on the ground.

These mega trends will have an impact on you apply the knowledge you have gained here and how you will lead. Your context is:

- **Rise of the individual and citizen.** Personalised tailored services are demanded by us all in the new digital age and that means we in government or business have to consciously walk in our customers/citizens shoes when we design services or products.
- **Modernising, reforming or transforming** systems and processes into **digital** services is a cornerstone for Government and Business we all pursue efficiency, enhanced engagement or market share.
- This then generates **data** like we have never seen – which raises questions of how to store, use, share, monetise, analyse data. Consider the role of the Cloud in data storage. In your careers data will be a large part of any career or role in Government and Business
- **Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality and Automation** – will all shape our world and how we live and work through new technologies, digital and data.
- **Critical infrastructure and Cyber** – Covid showed how porous and fragile our supply chains are when we don't understand and manage them well.
- **Productivity in a zero-migration world** – a real issue for Australia as without migration our nation doesn't grow which in turn impacts collection of income tax and the ageing population of Australia
- **Ageing Population** – a factor in Australia that goes beyond the Royal Commission and one of workforce participation

as the number of Australians engaged in the workforce declined from 2020.

- **And against all of this Trust and Transparency expectations will grow and you will be a part of this world.**

Take any of these trends and how you engage with them, as how you work and lead will be infinitely different in the years to come; the knowledge and life experiences gained here at the University of Canberra will stand you in good stead to address our changing times.

So as you Graduate here today and take the next steps into your career, (when I was you) what lessons **did I take forward**? What has held me in good stead as a Partner and Chair of KPMG here in Canberra?

- Understand how you learn!
 - Resilience- failure in Statistics, Computing P* to HD and programming, how you re-group and own outcomes
 - Curiosity – life long learning
 - Networking – collect people and relationships
 - Courage – to ask the questions, to say no I don't agree and to call out bad behaviour even of leaders
 - To be a leader you must lead yourself first (self awareness), then lead a team and then you lead the business
 - Technology – lean into it
- And of course be Adaptable and be an Eagle first!!

My heartfelt congratulations to you all – on this incredible milestone and achievement in life. I trust you embrace your

life-long learning and can make a real difference to the world.