

## **UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA OCCASIONAL ADDRESS 2023**

### **FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND FACULTY OF ARTS AND DESIGN**

#### **MR BOB ROSS**

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we are meeting and pay my respect to elders, past, present and emerging.

I would also like to acknowledge the special guests here today:

- Professor Tom Calma AO, Chancellor
- Professor Paddy Nixon, Vice-Chancellor
- Professor Barney Dalgarno, Executive Dean – Faculty of Education
- Distinguished Professor Jen Webb, Interim Executive Dean - Faculty of Arts & Design
- University of Canberra Council members
- University of Canberra Executive staff
- Executives from the ACT Education Directorate

Above all else I pass on my congratulations to the students who are graduating today from the Education and Arts and Design Faculties. You have reached the end of a long process. You have probably wondered if this would ever happen as you plodded through the university course and demands of study.

I am sure your parents would have a great sense of pride and pleasure to see you achieve this milestone of graduation and whatever follows from here. Someone once said to me that parents love graduations and seeing the success of their children. However, he also said that a graduation ceremony is a great time to ask your parents for money. I know, I am a parent.

Today is also a dejavu event for me. I was in your position graduating from Sydney University at this time exactly 50 years ago. Life was much simpler then, as were education processes. It is a much more complex world now.

I have some suggestions for you all as you move into the next world. I suggest you remember how you feel at this moment and remember what you are thinking about in terms of the future. Make it a place you can think about as your life progresses. This moment today, will be a simpler, more ordinary, moment than it will be as your career, and

future learning takes hold. Your ideas and vision will dwell in this space over time for you to visit in your mind.

Over my life and career, remembering this time as an ordinary man I found it allowed me to remain grounded and think of things in a way that removes me from the rush and pressure you will no doubt feel as you progress through your future career. It also allowed me to be objective, measured in my thoughts and able to plan with wider parameters.

As graduates you will all have ideas for education, for the arts, for design and for improving the world. We need you to grow and lead as contributors to society. Lifelong learning will become a more complex matter and probably very rewarding.

Leadership should be part of your makeup.

During my career, I spent teaching, executive and Principal time in high schools in NSW and then later in the ACT. During this I moved to a District Superintendent and then Director role for the NSW education system in senior positions managing around 240 varied schools each year. I was particularly focussed on student welfare matters. The combination of, in school work and leadership in the system, provided a good balance.

During my time in schools I also gained an interest in the Arts. The visual arts, music and the performing arts particularly took my attention with many musical productions being the result. Even now my wife and I have opened an art gallery on our property, to enjoy the arts in retirement.

I have spent a lot of time working in leadership with teachers, executives and principals, to shape leadership capabilities. I finished my career in the ACT running leadership programs for the system. I still support teachers and aspiring leaders when contacted.

There are many leadership talents..... however I will give you 4 suggestions I think are needed for good leadership, and that can impact on you, in your life and work. Leadership is about having the skills to further your vision for the benefit of others - particularly those you work with, and know. You can do this at any age and experience.

It doesn't matter what your field is, but your leadership will be driven from your ideas, your vision, your knowledge and capabilities. It is about positioning yourself to successfully make the 4 skills I am mentioning, a successful base to get your vision and ideas across to others.

Then you can change the world.

First, a leader must show nous. This is not a commonly used word these days but it refers to using common sense and using your intelligence to think in a practical way. Nous also allows you to keep grounded, as I have mentioned, and also allows you to see problems that are coming your way, before they happen.

Second, a leader needs to have vision for the future. Always revisit your vision to see how you are going and where your ideas want to take you. Are you consistently following the path you want to be on or have things changed. Change is OK if you know it is happening. This moment today will be your guiding light.

Third, a leader should be self aware, and be able to best look at themselves. Where are you going, what are you achieving and it will also help you understand your weaknesses and strengths.

It also gives you leadership makeup that will help you guide others through their life. Establishing good relationships with others is essential and will also help in broadening the base of what you are trying to achieve.

Lastly, keep good home /work life balance and act on any imbalance promptly. The more grounded you are the greater your capacity to generate the balance required to achieve the best from yourself. Usually the imbalance is in favour of work, so you need to monitor that.

*Remember - Franklin Roosevelt said,*

*" It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead - and find no one there."*

To finish, I want to tell you about Michael. As new graduates his story might inspire you to achieve everything that is possible.

I first met Michael when he came to the high school I was working in. He was a skinny, short young chap aged around 12. He came as a good sportsperson, a good academic, good in the performing and visual arts, and a quality speaker. He progressed through to his senior years and I taught him Economics. He was a great student.

Michael then moved on to the University of Sydney. He studied Economics and completed his studies as a graduate with 1st class Honours, and also winning the University Medal. He then progressed to his Masters of Economics and Econometrics. He also gained First Class Honours here.

Michael gained a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University in the UK where he completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Economics.

He also worked as a Research Economist with the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin, Ireland. Michael returned to Australia and lectured at the University of Sydney in Econometrics for a couple of years.

He then took a position in the Reserve Bank and was the Deputy Head of the Economic Research and then Economic Analysis over 8 years.

However, Michael had another side.....

During this time Michael returned to his artistic and design past. He made a decision to go to the National Institute of Dramatic Art. He graduated from NIDA while also working at the Reserve Bank.

He was then promoted to be the Chief representative in the New York branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia. Here, he was lucky enough, or unlucky enough to meet with Donald Trump.

In 2022 Michael took over as the Head of Banking in the Reserve Bank, working with all banks in Australia to ensure effective banking practices.

On the other side.....

Michael was delving into the dramatic and performing arts, and film making, since his work with NIDA, and has teamed up with another actor, to develop technology based short films. Those in the Art and Design faculty might know more about that than me.

He was involved in the writing, production, direction, financing, acting and technical matters as the film experience was pursued. I had lunch with Michael last Thursday and learnt about his experience in California 2 weeks ago as he and his dramatic group were nominated for an award in the Cinequest International Film Festival. They won the competition for short films and came 2nd in a similar festival in France.

He is also married with 3 children. So home / work life balance is high on his agenda.

Michael made his life in my teaching subject and I have followed his life with interest. I believe he is a fine example of how you, as graduates, can impact others through your life and work. He is also a humble and well balanced person - an ordinary man in many ways!

The man I am talking about is Michael Plumb. Look him up on Google. He is evidence that where a person starts their real life as a graduate, they are able to shape it in their way, and to manage themselves. I asked Michael what was the one thing he feels got him to where he is now. After much thought he said “ When you have an idea or a desire to achieve in a particular area, then go for it”.

Michael also has the skills I talked about, that make effective leaders. He is also a lifelong learner, and this is something you should all keep in mind. As your life passes you will add to your academic skills with a lot more learning about all aspects of life. This will contribute to your work, social and personal life. It will also develop the complexity of your life and what you can achieve.

You are not ordinary people, however return from time to time to this moment of today. You are also leaders, and we need you to take the world forward. Anything is possible!

*To quote Michael Plumb - go for it!*

You too can become Michael Plumb in your field. If you do that and also remain as “down to earth” as Michael, you will achieve a lot in your career and life. I wish you every success and thank you for giving me time to reflect on this turning point in your lives. I wish you all the best in the future as you look for the possibilities that lie ahead.