

Occasional address – Faculty of Science & Technology

Dion Devow

Good afternoon distinguished guests, esteemed faculty, proud families, and most importantly, the brilliant graduates of 2024

Today is a day of celebration, a day of reflection, and a day of triumph. You have worked tirelessly, dedicating your energy, your creativity, and your intellect to reach this pivotal moment. To each of you, standing on the precipice of boundless opportunity, I offer my most heartfelt congratulations. You have earned this, not just through the completion of exams, assignments, but through your resilience, your passion, and the determination to succeed.

As I stand here, looking out at this diverse and dynamic group, I see more than just graduates in biomedical and environmental science and information technology, I see the future. I see problem-solvers, innovators, and leaders who will shape the world in ways we cannot yet fully comprehend.

Your Education is your key to success. It will give you access to places others will not have access to. It will open doors to opportunities that will enable you to thrive, pivot, create, develop, and mould your lives into whatever you want to be.

That is the power of Education

I'd like to share a story with you of my mother.

Who was born to a beautiful Torres Strait Islander woman (my grandmother) and an African American soldier who was posted in Cairns NQ where my grandmother was working as a chefs offsider in a resort. My mother never met her father, as went to war and never returned, but before he left, he made my grandmother promise that if anything happened to him, that she would make sure my mother was given an education, at the highest level possible.

My grandmother honoured that promise and my put my mother through a private boarding school, she was the only black student, and fought for her place in that school, but she attained a yr10 level education which is those days for any woman was not too bad.

However, after leaving school she still meeting my father and having me and my sister Destiny, she could only every get cleaning jobs, it was a sign of the times I

suppose. But she also worked hard as a cleaner and studies part time for 6 years. I remember as a small boy going with her to clean the houses of the RICH white people in the street that we lived, and she then went onto clean at my primary school. But when I was a teenager she attained her teachers degree, and I saw first-hand how her education changed the socio economic status of our family like that, OVERNIGHT!!!.

My mother then went on to be part of a cohort of the Country's first black teachers, with a career spanning 4 decades teaching

Kindy
Primary and secondary School
And University level.

I have lost count at how many of her ex-students have come up to me to tell my that my mother is the reason that they went to uni, or that she inspired them to become of teacher and it makes me so proud to be her son.

My mother found her purpose in life, and used education as the key to open the door to that purpose and you all are on your way to finding what your purpose is.

I too found my purpose through seeing my mother. She taught me valuable things, to get a degree and to always put religion first.
I listen to her words, and I too have had an amazing career working in Indigenous Health, Education, Justice and business.

I am a NAIDOC BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR
A NAIDOC ORGANISATION OF THE YEAR,
A NAIDOC PERSON OF THE YEAR AND AN
AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR.

I COULD NOT HAVE ACHIEVED ANY OF THESE THINGS WITHOUT AN
EDUCATION.

I WAS TOLD BY A TEACHER THAT I WOULD NOT AMOUNT TO ANYTHING
AND THAT I WAS NOT CLEVER ENOUGH TO DO A DEGREE IN I.T , BUT
THROUGH BUSINESS I HAVE CREATED 3 IT COMPANIES AND WON
CONTRACTS WITH DEFENCE WORTH OVER A MILLIONS DOLLARS.

I WAS ALSO VERY SHY AND WOULD NEVER SPEAK UP IN CLASS, NOW I GET
PAID TO TALK ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY AND HAVE EVEN DONE A TEDX
TALK

THAT'S THE POWER OF EDUCATION

****The Power of Your Knowledge****

Graduates of biomedical science, medical, and environmental science, your studies have been at the core of what sustains life on this planet. From understanding the intricacies of the human body to analysing the ecosystems that surround us, your contributions have never been more vital.

The world today faces unprecedented challenges — global pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss — but with challenge comes the greatest opportunity for impact. You are now equipped with the tools that you will further develop to take on these pressing issues. You have the power to advance medical breakthroughs, TO develop sustainable solutions, and protect the health of our planet and its inhabitants.

Graduates of information technology, you can master fields that are not only shaping industries but are also revolutionizing the way we live, work, and interact with each other.

We live in a world where data is the new currency, where algorithms guide our decisions, and where MACHINES ARE LEARNING IN ways that were once the stuff of science fiction.

You are the architects of this new world, responsible for ensuring that the technology we create serves all of humanity with fairness, transparency, and ethics.

****The Journey Ahead****

The road ahead will not be without its obstacles but remember this: the greatest accomplishments come from overcoming the most formidable challenges. You will face setbacks, but they will only serve to make your successes more meaningful. Today, as you prepare to embark on the next chapter of your journey, know that you have been given the foundation upon which to build a future filled with possibility.

In each of your respective fields, you will be called upon to innovate. To question the status quo. To push boundaries. And, above all, to lead with integrity.

It is not just about what you know — it is about how you use that knowledge. In a world that is rapidly changing, it is those who can adapt, those who can think critically, and those who remain grounded in their values who will thrive.

****Your Impact on the World****

The world today is in desperate need of hope, of people who can envision a better future and work relentlessly to bring it into reality. Your education has empowered you to be those people —

to make the invisible visible,
to turn impossibilities into opportunities,
and to rewrite the future for the better.

****Conclusion****

So, to the Class of 2024, I say this: the world is waiting for you. Go forth with courage. Be bold in your ideas. Be compassionate in your leadership. Be relentless in your pursuit of excellence.

You have already proven that you are capable of great things, and now the world will benefit from your brilliance. Be kind to others, it will always come back to you, and most of all be kind to yourselves. (YOU DESERVE IT)

Congratulations once again, graduates.

The future is yours to shape.

Thank you.