

Andrew Greene, UC Occasional Address

Faculty of Arts & Design, Faculty of Education - 23 September 2023

Thank you to the University of Canberra for the great honour of speaking to you today.

I want to begin by acknowledging the Chancellor, Interim Vice-Chancellor, University Executives and staff, parents, friends, partners, relatives and most importantly; you the graduating class of 2024.

Congratulations on reaching the end of a gruelling, sometimes exhilarating and often challenging journey.

Graduates - you have made it!

All those years of hard work and personal sacrifices have been worth it....

Late nights of essay writing, early morning starts for lectures and tutorials (perhaps while still nursing sore heads), the anxious sweats inside exam halls, and for many - the long hours of working part-time jobs needed to support your tertiary studies - have now hopefully ended.

Graduation ceremonies are a quaint but wonderful life event – I would argue almost as good as weddings, birthdays and overseas holidays. They are also a great privilege.

In Australia less than half of the population obtains a bachelor's degree, while elsewhere around the globe, attending university is something many can only ever dream of.

Almost twenty years ago I too had the great privilege of sitting with University of Canberra students at a graduation ceremony – ready to receive our hard-earned degrees.

Don't ask me who gave the address at that ceremony back in 2005, I haven't got a clue, let alone can I remember anything he or she said in their speech - so I promise I will at least try to keep my remarks today brief.

Although I still insist it wasn't that far back, university life twenty years ago was certainly very different to today. None of our tutorials or lectures were held online, we didn't experience a global pandemic that disrupted the great experience of campus life. And whoever it was that delivered the 2005 graduation address could not have relied on ChatGPT to write it...

Back when I graduated with my Bachelor of Communications in Journalism, I was fortunate to have already been working fulltime as a journalist for a couple of years, having temporarily dropped out of university to take up a two-week media job, after strong encouragement from a lecturer (who was presumably sick of me!)

Thankfully that initial fortnight of work at a local Canberra radio station led to a fulltime job in a country town, then soon back to a Canberra position, followed by a particularly lucky break – getting a reporting role in the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery at the age of **21**.

This was the first and most important lesson I would learn as a professional; **take risks, seize opportunities** (no matter how unappealing they may seem at first) and **make the most of the chances** that you are given – it's probably the most valuable career advice you can hear.

But back in 2001 when I first arrived at the University of Canberra as a 17-year-old not yet legally able to drink at the student bar, I was also given another valuable life lesson; **failure** – and how to **make the most of setbacks**.

I had somehow managed to get admitted into a double degree – Journalism and Law, but within a semester my ambitions for a law degree quickly evaporated, and I became the third generation of my family to not pass legal studies.

Despite genuinely studying hard, I failed my introduction to law unit spectacularly, and I soon realised that if I ever wanted to chase ambulances for a living it would have to be as a journalist, not as a much better paid lawyer!

And while I strongly disagreed with the academic standards of the University of Canberra's Law School back in 2001, the lecturers there did me a great favour – by refusing to pass me - they put me on my much better suited career path of journalism, and I am eternally grateful to them.

Last year however I was equally thankful, and slightly amused, to accept an offer to become an Adjunct Professor at the University of Canberra, in, you guessed it - the School of Business, Government and **Law**! (I feel maybe I'm slightly partly qualified to teach in one of those areas)

Anyhow - shortly after beginning my career in journalism, I learnt another incredibly important lesson – the value of **mentors** and **mentoring**. When I took up my first reporting job at Federal Parliament, I met the first of several invaluable mentors whose generosity helped me find my feet in a daunting work environment. Mentors I am pleased to call friends to this day.

I mention these two gentlemen – because the value of having a generous mentor early in your career, who is prepared to give up their time to help you as you get started in your profession, cannot be understated.

There will come a day when you, the graduating class of 2024, will also be able to mentor younger generations of colleagues and co-workers, after hopefully having also benefited from receiving this same valuable help early in your careers.

However, as many of you prepare to soon begin your fulltime careers, I fear the pace of change you will face is going to be on a far greater scale than anything that has been experienced over the past twenty years.

The disruptive forces of emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (that some of you may have already found useful for completing university assignments), will only continue to cause greater upheaval at workplaces, and across society more generally.

This technological disruption is already turbocharging what has been called “**truth decay**” in societies across the world – that is the diminishing reliance on facts and analysis, or the increasing disagreement about objective facts.

Sociologists and political commentators are also recognising the alarming fall in public trust for traditional institutions – such as governments, courts, universities and my own profession, the media. Turning around this “**trust deficit**” is something each of you can work to address in your careers.

To conclude I encourage you as university graduates and professionals to continue to read widely and engage with facts wherever possible. In an era of increasing fragmentation where many of us regularly retreat into our own echo chambers, having a more open mind is crucial. Try to keep abreast of current events and to consume news from a variety of reputable sources.

In Australia we have the privilege of being able to hear opinions we disagree with. Use this privilege wisely. Take time to **read** things you disagree with. Take time to **hear** things you disagree with. If you don't like an opinion, take the time to **understand** why. Use this privilege well and use it often.

It was once said to me, probably by my father, that the greatest advantage of going to university is not receiving a degree - but instead being taught the ability to recognise when someone else is speaking bullsh*t. As a journalist based in Canberra, I think about this piece of wisdom a lot!

Having become graduates of a fine university in Australia's capital, many of you will soon work with government, business and industry helping to serve your communities and nation. You will do so after having the fortune of studying at the University of Canberra and benefiting from the input of your lecturers and tutors, and the support of your families and partners.

Class of 2024 – congratulations. For many of you, your life as students now comes to an end, and the world of full-time work beckons. Look forward with **optimism, determination, kindness, humility** and a healthy degree of **scepticism**.

A world of opportunity and the chance to make a real difference lies before you. Make the most of it, and my best wishes for your every success. And don't forget to celebrate tonight – hopefully with some of your closest and dearest. Good luck and thank you.