

ADDRESS TO UWA GRADUANDS

of the Faculty of Arts, Business, Law & Education

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by Marion Fulker – CEO of the Committee for Perth
& Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia

Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, dignitaries, colleagues, graduands and their family and friends. I appreciate the invitation to address you this evening and for the opportunity to don robes again, having only worn them once before when I graduated with an MBA as mature-age student back in 2009.

Thank you for being welcomed to country Barry. I am deeply committed to reconciliation and to advancing initiatives to acknowledge, respect and celebrate Aboriginal people, their culture and heritage.

This evening is the culmination of years of dedication to learning. Tonight, we celebrate the hard work and perseverance it has taken to get you to this point. I know how much you have personally sacrificed – sleepless nights, missing out on social occasions, stress and debt to name just a few.

Because of that you have gone beyond rudimentary learning to have built a knowledge base that sets you up and apart from many in society.

What a wonderful achievement and I commend you.

On this important night, I thought I would share my thoughts on three themes that could be helpful as you leave here tonight with your degree proudly in hand.

A journey that is likely to result in a leadership position. You might find yourself as head of a project team or division. One day you may lead an organisation or be the face of a cause. Or in government being a leader of the people.

Whatever path you take it is unlikely to be a sequence of well-planned steps in which you move seamlessly from A to B. It is likely to be an expedition of jerky forward, backwards and sideways moves.

The first theme is obligation. Having attended one of Australia's pre-eminent universities, you have been part of a privileged group. And with the learning, skills and expertise you have acquired comes an obligation. An obligation to put it all in to practice so find the right organisation, or create one yourself, to dedicate your time and energy to.

And whilst you are fulfilling your obligation to deploy what you have learnt, I challenge you to go beyond the borders of familiar territory and move in circles that will take you into uncomfortable places and spaces. It is here you will test your resilience and ability to adapt. Both are essential qualities in today's rapidly changing and highly disrupted world.

The second theme is responsibility. I believe it is your responsibility to make a difference and to do that you need to engage both your head and your heart.

Being human is what sets us apart from the technology that is increasingly impacting on the way that we live so bring intellectual and emotional intelligence to all that you do.

For me that meant choosing an organisation in which I could make a fundamental difference. To do something meaningful that has a positive impact on this and the future generations of people living in Perth.

My third and final theme is gratitude. The description of gratitude that resonates with me the most is 'a positive emotion that serves a purpose'. In essence, beyond feeling thankful, it is a deeper appreciation for someone or something that lasts longer and adds to your positivity. It is said that gratitude also helps people to connect to something larger than themselves.

To get to this celebration tonight you have had a support team. Your family, friends and lecturers and to them you owe your gratitude. Being grateful is one of the most humbling experiences and one that, to my mind, should be practiced often.

Coming back to leadership. Leadership is about having a vision that is clearly articulated and understood. One that people can get behind to achieve the desired goals. It requires courage to lead and it can be lonely at the top. Surround yourself with supporters who will love and nurture you as well as those that will give you frank and fearless advice.

Aside from the key themes of obligation, responsibility and gratitude, as aspirant leaders I also encourage you to:

- Seek out the facts
- Read voraciously
- Take an interest in politics and world affairs
- Be open minded

You are about to embark on an incredible journey to create the footsteps of your own career. A set of opportunities and experiences that will be uniquely yours.

My career has developed from high school drop out to the C-Suite via roles in banking & finance, IT and the for-purpose sectors, eventually underpinned by that all important degree.

It has given me the opportunity to oversee the development of over a 100 pieces of research to better understand Perth and its role in the world. It has led me to study more than 30 cities in Scandinavia, the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand to discern what Perth can learn. And it has provided me with the means to meet people I otherwise would never have had the opportunity to. Each of these adds to my own knowledge base, one that is recognised by this very university and sought out by others.

Who would have thought that a girl born in the shadows of BHP's steelworks in Newcastle, raised in Sydney by a single mother and her extended family, that moved to Perth sight unseen could do all of that and in doing so help to shape the future of this wonderful city.

My own unique set of experiences has, at times been difficult at journey, yet mostly thoroughly rewarding and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

In closing tonight, I will leave you with a quote from Noongar Elder, Dr Richard Walley OAM who is one of the wisest people I know – Richard says that 'experience is what you get when things don't go your way.' Graduates, I wish you a lifetime of experience that builds on the person you are today to become someone that makes a difference each and every day.

Congratulations!