

Rector Mclvor, Deputy Rectors Sparrow and Stevenson, Deans, Teachers and Family Members – you all must draw enormous satisfaction at seeing these students progress from youthful enthusiasm (perhaps tinged with a measure of misbehaviour) to fine young men, who are all destined for a productive and fruitful life through your efforts and hard work.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to your graduating students.

To the Year 13 Students;

Congratulations on making it this far. While it may seem the hard work has been completed, it has only just begun!

Congratulations on completing your schooling. This is no easy feat. It is a big occasion, and the fact that there are many of you does not diminish the huge effort that most of you had to put in to reach this point.

Where you are now, is at the end of the beginning.

Do not fear what lies ahead. It is the start of a new journey. It is where you begin to prepare for your life-time careers.

Yes, there is still plenty of study and learning to do. You will have to cram for exams. You are likely to have more freedom, and with this comes a requirement for a greater degree of discipline. You will likely need to find some part-time work to help you adjust to the demands of university life, or wherever your next stage of study lies.

Be in no doubt that what you do from now on, gradually becomes critical to where you will make your mark in life.

I would like to borrow some wise words from the Founder and Chairman of Mainfreight, Bruce Plested – a man I look up to and has taught me much about life. He shared the following words of wisdom with Auckland University graduands last year – and I have taken the liberty of altering them slightly to reflect my own thoughts. They are very appropriate for you all:

Firstly – some people will already know what they want to do – to work in teaching, farming, engineering, law, health, or finance, or whatever. Head off and first begin working on what YOU think YOU want to do.

Second – work on your fitness. Many students neglect fitness through lack of time, discipline, or through neglect – not realising

its importance. If you are going to make it in this world, you are going to need to be physically fit to be resilient for long periods for the rest of your life. Fitness and success are brothers.

Third – look inward to see what motivates you. Do you get noticed, are you an introvert or extrovert, do you like order or chaos, do you like rules or like breaking them, are you a team player, or more of an individual. Identifying what motivates you may show you where your strengths lie.

Fourth – try to work out what you like. This can be hard if you like something but are not yet naturally good at it. Make the decision, you have lots of time. Set out to find a way of getting good (preferably excellent) at what you like doing.

If you are good at what you like, and you can create a career from it, it can be said that you will never have to work.

Fifth – set high standards in everything you do. Build life skills of getting up early, learning to cook, cleaning, fixing things that are broken, caring and considering others, being positive at all times; doing your job (whatever it is) with excellence.

Somehow you have to combine this discipline with a bit of rule breaking. Some rule breaking is always necessary, and with disciplined logic and emotion your rule breaking will create success.

Sixth – be grateful for the luck of your birth, and the country in which you live. Check your choices with the question, “would Mum approve of what I’m doing?”!! Wear rose-coloured glasses and see your surroundings and acquaintances with a positive perspective all the time. Most people are honest, and trying to do what they think is their best. Communicate your highest expectations from those around you – always.

Seventh – recognise crossroads when they appear in your life, especially a global financial crisis, accidents, redundancy, firing, death of someone close to you, a crime, world events. Bad events are fantastic opportunities for making you really think and take strong action – do I want to be here, what if I never see the world, how are we going to benefit from this event? Mainfreight benefits from every crisis.

(And by the way, make sure you do travel and see the world, it opens your mind to endless opportunities).

Eighth – If you start to think “I like this, and I think I’m good at it, better than those already doing it” – have a go. Either apply for that bigger role (or that extra degree) – or start up on your own and do it. Every single thing in our lives is the result of someone having a go, inventing something or improving on it. From the clock that wakes us up, the bed you get out of, the car, the mobile phone, the app ...

And please, you’re not an entrepreneur because you invent an app – but you’re getting the right idea.

Ninth – Try to wipe the word “I” from your vocabulary. Start your sentences with: “we”, “have you considered”, “have you noticed”, “would you suggest”. Always it is about what WE want to achieve or do. When we can remove “I” from our centre of thinking, we can probably move to number 10, the last recommendation.

Tenth – start thinking about making a difference to your neighbourhood, or community, or country, or the world, at a young age. We can all make a difference and the more of us who do, the better the world will be. Be like the Boy Scouts – seek to do a good turn for someone every day, be courteous when driving, smile at all those you meet.

Understand, part of your job on earth is to make those you come into contact with on any day feel a bit better than before they met you.

I note the vision of the School – “A Timaru Boys High School young man will be aspirational, respectful and a positive contributor to his community, with an inquiring and independent mind”. Stand by those values and you shall indeed find success in your lives.

**Good luck – you are now totally in control of the rest of your life.
The apron strings have been cut!**

Ka ki te ano

Don Braid

3 November 2015