

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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The Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

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I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand as well as Chancellor Vicki Sara, Vice-Chancellor Ross Milbourne, Dean Desley Luscombe, members of Council, staff, distinguished guests, graduates, families and friends.

The place of rites and the marking of significant points in our life cannot be underestimated. It is important that we reflect on where we have been; celebrate our achievements in getting to where we are before looking forward to consider the future.

Today is a fine day to savour the satisfaction and feel relief that the many hard years of work and application in attaining your degrees have finally come to an end. I am sure this is especially true for your families and friends. Finally your weekends are your own and life after work hours can be explored.

However, another important stage in your life journey is about to begin.

What does the future hold? And how will you shape your own role and make your mark in this? This is a particularly interesting question at the start of this new millennium.

Karlson 'Charlie' Hargroves and Michael H. Smith state in *The Natural Advantage of Nations*:

“Let us keep in mind that we are the generation for which previous generations committed themselves to save the environment. We are the generation for which the commitment was made to restore the balance. In 1972 the first global inter-governmental meeting on the environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden. Progress since then has been widely regarded as being insufficient. It is now our generation's responsibility to take on this challenge as a central motivating principle and use the lessons of the last 30 years to ensure the next 30 years are different... In another 30 years, if things do not change, it will be too late: the impacts of global warming will be truly felt across the globe and the development paths of fast growing economies like China will be well and truly decided.”

Clearly the future must be sustainable. But what does this really mean? And how will this impact on we who are involved in the design and construction industries? What are the skills that will be required in the future?

I believe that your choice to undertake a degree that has helped you develop creative approaches to problem solving places you in an enviable position for the future. Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, believes the advantage will go to those who can out imagine and out create their competitors.

Particularly, sustainability requires we embrace the future with openness to new and clever paradigms regarding how we think about and do things. I believe such a future holds many exciting opportunities to be realised.

Additionally, recent studies show that companies that will do well in the future are ones looking at more than just their economic bottom line. As Michael Porter says in *Harvard Business Review, September-October 95* "Environmental progress demands that companies innovate to raise resource productivity, precisely the new challenge of global competition."

So what will we be creating?

The inequity of our environmental impact on the world compared with other nations was highlighted on a recent trip to India. While there are some similarities we share in policy and implementation issues, the vast gulf between our need to cut back on consuming too much, particularly with regard to water and power, was put into contrast by their need to try to at least provide basic essentials for their population – in a non-polluting, sustainable way. I was reminded of Ghandi's assertion that our world can provide for every man's need, but not every man's greed.

How does this fit with the much-touted need for ever expanding gross domestic products based on more and more consumption in order to supposedly maintain our global economy?

Around the world, evidence is coming to light that calls this assumption into question. There are case studies that show that rather than unnecessary goods that detract from and pollute our ecosystems, we can produce goods that we need, which also feed and work with our ecosystems. Moreover, the companies leading the way in this approach are doing very well. They show how product companies can save the world AND maintain a healthy economy.

Zimbabwean architect Mick Pierce is leading a multidisciplinary group to design a new building to house Melbourne City council – called Council House 2. The team worked solidly together at the start to develop a visionary new building with the potential to change forever the way Australia – indeed the world – approaches ecologically sustainable design. As the web site states, CH2 has sustainable technologies incorporated into every conceivable part of its 10 storeys. A water-mining plant in the basement, phase-change materials for cooling, automatic night-purge windows, wavy concrete ceilings, a façade of louvres (powered by photovoltaic cells) that track the sun – even the pot plant holders have involved a whole new way of thinking.

The carpet company Interface state as part of their goals:

We believe that there's a cure for resource waste that is profitable, creative and practical. We must create a company that addresses the needs of society and the environment by developing a system of industrial production that decreases our costs and dramatically reduces the burdens placed upon living systems. This also makes precious resources available for the billions of people who need more. What we call the next industrial revolution is a momentous shift in how we see the world, how we operate within it, what systems will prevail and which will not. At Interface, we are completely reimagining and redesigning everything we do, including the way we define our business.....

The Australian Close the Loop company profile states:

Close the Loop® was founded in late 2000 with the specific goals of recycling toner and inkjet cartridges with zero waste to landfill, and returning the raw materials back to the original manufacturer for reuse in new printers and cartridges. The name Close the Loop® was chosen because the original idea was, and still is, to create a service that closes the loop on print consumables.

This has been achieved though innovative measures created by a team of Australian engineering companies and Australian recycling experts.

As petrol prices rise in response to dwindling supplies and the natural environment responds in violent and unpredictable ways to increasing levels of CO2 emissions, the need for urgent, innovative changes to our built environment and settlement patterns becomes increasingly obvious. We must find ways of improving our existing environments and how we operate within them.

I do not know what all the answers are yet, but I do know that we need to take a fresh look at the problems we face and design new solutions in a creative and desirable way. Moreover, we need people such as you to choose to channel your considerable skills and energy to find a bright, positive and sustainable future.

And so back to the celebration of your graduation. I again congratulate you on your successes to date and hope that you and your families have time to take pleasure in your achievements. As for the future, I look forward to participating with you in what I predict will be an exciting and innovative journey.

Thank you Chancellor.