Presiding Officer, Faculty Dean, academic staff, distinguished guests, graduates their families and friends – Good afternoon.

I would firstly like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora national upon whose ancestral lands the University of Sydney is built.

I have been in this Great Hall on a number of occasions before – however, this is the first time I have been student facing. On two occasions, I have sat on the side of the students, waiting to receive my own degrees, and three times I have sat where your family and friends are now sitting as my own children have received their degrees – with another visit coming up early next year!

It is a great honour, therefore, to have been asked to give this occasional address to you today, the graduating students.

Today is indeed an important and proud day for all of who are graduating, and of course, your families. It is indeed an honour and an achievement to obtain a degree from this very extremely prestigious university. Well done.

You will know by introduction that while I am in business, I am not in the business of ‘numbers’ like so many of you today will be in your careers. I am in the business of ‘people’.

However, I can guarantee that all of you in your career are going to be dealing with someone from the HR department at some stage. Generally, you have to first get passed someone like us to get an interview with the ‘important people’ in the organisation. It is a good thing, therefore, to make an effort to get along with us. Particularly when you consider the numbers we do have influence over are those figures dear to most people’s hearts – their salaries.

On that subject….. on reaching the end of an extensive job interview, an HR person I know asked a Business graduate, fresh out of college, what salary they were looking for.

The Business grad said “in the range of $100-125,000, depending upon the package”

The HR person said, “Well what would you think about 6 weeks paid holiday, 20% superannuation, medical benefits and a company car – say a brand new BMW?”

The Business Grad sat straight up and said, “Wow, are you kidding?”
And the HR person replied: “Yes, but you started it”.

A couple of tips about CVs and Interviews.....

Keep your CV short and absolutely to the point – companies spend a very short period of time skimming CVs for the relevant information – and do not want to wade through pages and pages of font so small that it takes a magnifying glass to read it.

One of my particular dislikes – do not bother putting down your personal interests. Everyone says ‘Travel, Reading, Spending time with my Family’. Also, if you say you like reading Shakespeare in your spare time as opposed to binge watching Netflix – I am probably not going to believe you!

And, most importantly, tell the truth – do not say you have qualifications you do not; you achieved results you did not – we usually find out.

When it comes to interviews – the simple things count: be on time, and know about the company who are interviewing you. Yes, it sounds basic, but you would be shocked at how many people do not.

And, use your powers of observation. What do I mean by that? I recently had an interesting interview with a graduate who had a couple of years work experience. He regaled me, without any irony, of the problems he was facing with members of his team. ‘Lovely women, he said, but they’re older and just don’t get it’. I seriously wondered if he had forgotten his glasses that day. Do not make this mistake!

I hope I do ‘get it’ about work – you would hope so after so long but of course I did start work in a very different era. I clearly remember a number of us standing around in a group when I worked for Barclays staring in awe at the technological amazingness of a fax machine. Some of you are probably even wondering ‘what is a fax machine ‘— as it too, has gone the way of the Dodo.

So today what I would like to pass on to you is thoughts as you embark on your careers. Some are things I learned early on in my career, some I wish I had known early on.
1. **HAVE A PLAN**

(However, there is a sub text to this..... be prepared to dump it)

I talk to many young people new to the workforce who have a plan for their career that would make Stalin’s 5-year plan seem poorly thought through! Every step up the career ladder is mapped out in their mind – with timeframes next to it. Unfortunately, life doesn’t always work out for us the way we expect. Ask a few of our politicians about how their career plans are working out for them!

But, most careers have twists and turns and take us down paths on which we did expect to wander. That’s what makes life interesting. Take a risk in different industries; broaden your scope and your thinking – if you are in finance – have a stint in HR, if you are in HR get some experience in Operations.

Be daring and flexible – when opportunities come up – jump in and say yes – even if you are terrified – you can generally figure out what you have to do along the way. (A bit like when I said ‘yes’ to doing this address to you all today!).

You need to be aware that everyone, at some stage, feels a bit like a fraud – exuding confidence on the outside but all the while wondering when someone is going to find out they are just are making it up as they go along.

Flexibility and taking advantage of opportunities is the key here. Remember that Plan B you have in your back pocket – might be the best plan.

2. **DON’T WORRY IF YOU DON’T HAVE A PASSION**

There is a lot said and written about how everyone should follow his or her passion. Fabulous if you have one, but that can make some of us feel very anxious if we don’t have that ‘one’ thing that we are passionate about.

Some researchers now argue that having a single passion means that you may even close yourself off to other things that you might like to do or might be good at. Putting our heart and soul into one thing can also give you a narrow perspective and could lead to disappointment.
A better thing to do is to focus on your strengths: what skills are you good at? When we’re good at something, we have a much better chance of being success.

3. BE YOU

As some wit said – you cannot be anyone else – they’re all taken.

Be true to yourself. You will always find someone who is better than you at something. Do not compare and despair. You too have your strengths and the sooner you focus on your own path, the less money you will spend on counselling.

Don’t go into a career or a job that shrivels your soul just because that’s what your friends are doing or its what parents want you to do (This advice does not apply to my two daughters sitting here today – in their case ‘mother knows best’!)

We don’t fit in every company. You may have achieved the ‘dream job’ in the ‘dream company’ that everybody else wants but if you have that feeling in the pit of your stomach that it is not for you – take heed.

4. STICKABILITY

You are all graduating today, so that means you have stayed the course and have attained your degree. That takes perseverance.

However, without doubt, everyone of you somewhere along the line will come up against a setback in your career: you might not get the job you want, the promotion you deserve. Something like the GFC hits the economy and you find yourself out of a job. It happens to all of us at some stage.

Those amongst us who can pick ourselves back up after a derailment – and accept that it wasn’t part of the plan and persevere towards what we want to do – sometimes by that other route – have stickability. You cannot afford to be easily discouraged. If goals are achieved too easily, there is no satisfaction.
5. CONTINUE TO LEARN

I don’t mean here – take further degrees. Talk to people and listen – find out their stories. Open your mind to diverse thinking from other genders, older and younger people, people from different cultures. Leap at opportunities to travel. Read well – and not just Facebook – look for ways to continually challenge your own thinking. Be inspired and be inspiring to others.

Remember…. As Albert Einstein said: “Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.”

6. BE HUMAN

Remember that age-old proverb of ‘treat others as you would like to be treated’. You will not get up that ladder faster if you treat those around (including those more junior than you) badly – you are always judged by your actions in this world and not your words. Sure, not everyone can like you but you do not get far in life by making enemies – and it makes the journey a lot less enjoyable.

Make ethical decisions with integrity that are in accordance with your values. Always think - how would this look if it was on the front of tomorrow’s newspaper.

7. BE USEFUL

The best employees – and I don’t care what job they do – are those that make themselves useful to everyone they can.

Whether it is your part-time job, the first step on your career or your half way up the ladder.

Show enthusiasm and do things that make other people’s jobs easier – and I don’t mean making cups of coffee.

Be the person that everyone thinks is invaluable and irreplaceable – because you help the cause rather than hinder
So, in conclusion, I would like to wish you all good luck. This University has turned out many great leaders, and I am sure all of you here today will also make it proud. I wish you all fulfilling and successful careers in your chosen fields.