

Northern University – 2012 Commencement Speech

October 27, 2012, Singapore

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

Dear students, esteemed colleagues, valuable organizers and sponsors, guests and friends, I feel deeply honored for being invited to represent Northern University at this commencement ceremony.

Allow me to take a moment and recognize the organizers and sponsors of this event, their great work to bring us all together here to celebrate, award, be joyful and happy!

Let me also thank our officials and the wonderful country of Singapore for hosting us, with their traditional hospitality, generosity, and advanced civilization. This is my 5th time in Singapore and its culture, advances in business, arts and technology, clean environment, order and discipline, safety and privacy, good citizenship, nice and respectful people and transparent government continue to amaze me!

Singapore is a true example of what a system of free market, balanced capitalism, personal and religious freedom, minimum government intervention, social fairness can produce, despite a small, climate adverse place with virtually no natural resources, but at the cross of major trading routes. A place where the Western values perfectly blended with hard working, energetic, innovative minds of people of different South-East Asia, mostly of Chinese heritage reached highest level of civilization.

Dear students, this is YOUR event, YOUR time to celebrate. The rest of us are here to facilitate, add and hopefully enhance your experience, to applaud your accomplishment. I'm quite surprised but very pleased to see so many of you here. To see men and women of a wide range of age, background, profession, and study specialty, and also acquiring diverse diplomas at the master's and doctoral level.

Like all around here, on behalf of Dr. Nie Rong, the founder and president of Northern University, I gladly congratulate you for your educational achievement. Your degree is a well-deserved recognition by the Northern University of your knowledge, skills, many years of industry experience, your professional achievements and societal recognition. This formal recognition should earn you respect and admiration amongst your business peers and leaders and your family as well.

I'm sure that each and all of you have your plans for the future. And the Great China, such a fast developing nation, with its wonderful heritage and tradition, culture and several millennium of history needs you. As we all know, development, growth and advancement come with pain and sacrifices, too but also hope for better life for future generations. And Great China is not any different than other Western advanced countries when it comes to challenges of this 21st Century: globalization, social responsibility, ethics, social fairness, respect and accommodation of others different than the majority of us, increased competition for reduced resources, commodity price manipulation, over-consumption, waste and pollution, nuclear proliferation, genocide, dictatorship and rogue group of people, use of illegal drugs and their commercialization, abuses of all kind, respect for fundamental and universally recognized human rights, rising personal and national debt, degrading environment, continuous collision between various cultures and values, especially religions, territorial disputes, armed conflicts and terrorism (of all kinds). Did I miss anything? As you can see, despite all great advances of our civilization on this planet, old and now new challenges are here or ahead of us.

I don't try to discourage you, just the contrary, especially now, as established professionals in your career and field of specialty, backed by academic recognition, the society expects a lot more from you! Yourself and those around you at office or at home, expect more from you, because it's all about the legacy you leave to your children and society. For most of the history of humanity, most of time the children inherited virtually no wealth from their parents. Very few were born and raised with a "silver spoon" but rather with an iron/wooden shovel. These days is different, as in more and more countries, parents leave a legacy to their children so they can build upon rather than starting from scratch! Thus, more and more of us become wealthy! And, there is nothing wrong with being rich. But, it's all about how you can use your assets, knowledge and power to better off the society, participate in solving its challenges!

Dear students, now graduates, this is my message to you on this day marking an important event in your lives. Please keep it in your mind, close to your heart, remember it and pursue it. Because when the time comes for you to retire in your late years, there is no greatest satisfaction of living your life than your journey, your struggle, your legacy! What you did in your life, what you have accomplished, what you have left to your descendants, how are you going to be remembered, what did you do for your country and the world!

God bless and guide you all!

Dr. Clifford R. Kettemborough

Vice President, Northern University