

CONVOCATION ADDRESS: MARILYN COTTRELL

This morning is a day to be proud- as a professor I am proud to see you graduate, pride in yourselves for graduating, and parents, not only proud but also relieved- relieved that you have finally graduated. I say this as a parent of two children who graduated from Brock - and two children who needed to be further away from me.

When you entered first year at Brock University, I saw plenty of emotions – an entire gamut ranging from excitement to apprehension to self-esteem and self-doubt. Now, I see maturity, independent thinkers, and contributors to society, ready to set personal and professional goals.

Prior to entering university, I worked for four years in the private sector. I realized I was trapped in a “pink-collar” jungle. I decided that a university education was my way out. I chose Brock University, a small and unintimidating school. A decision I have never regretted. Fear? I WAS PETRIFIED! My self-confidence was non-existent.

My friends and professors at Brock University inspired me; they helped me out of my shell. I made a number of miss-steps in first year mainly because I was afraid. Remembering my struggle in adjusting to university life, I have tried to do my best to assist my students transition the great divide between high school and university.

My salvation was falling in love – in love with economics. It made sense to me. I began to read and study more, and I enjoyed what I was studying. My grades soared. I started to gain self-confidence. I turned from a person who could not speak in front of a small group to a person many of you in my classes and elsewhere secretly wished would stop talking. Now economics and economic education have become my life and my not so secret love.

My husband audited an economics’ course to better understand me – I don’t think that ever worked. Two of my children graduated in economics, one took economics as part of his accounting designation and another took several economics courses for the fun of it.

Although many people believe universities are for research, I believe the university’s underlying role is to provide a base of clear understanding to start students on a path of critical thinking for them to grow and become self-fulfilled. To this end, the approach I have taken in my courses has been to bring my students into a culture where learning is fun; where each student is able to master the subject matter and in so doing gain knowledge which will make them more productive members of society.

Most students will remember that $E = MC^2$; and in economics, students will remember that demand equals supply. My goal has been to ensure that students know and remember much more than just these basics. More importantly, as in other disciplines to learn critical thinking.

Course standards must be maintained because certain essential levels of competency are judged globally. You have reached these accredited standards and surpassed them; you are ready to tackle the world. I have every faith in your abilities to reach whatever goals you set for yourselves.

You are empowered!

You have the self-confidence required!

You have the material you need to succeed!

You have learned the joy of being a life-long learner!

You enjoy the curiosity and the questioning!

You appreciate the multi-media approaches to problem solving!

You enrich your decision-making through creative forms, including networking!

You will create a life that feels good on the inside, not one that just looks good on the outside!

If you leave this world better than you found it, then as professors, as graduands and as parents we are all better off.

SURGITE!