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to School of Law & School of Social Sciences Graduation Ceremony
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You stand today on the cusp. Behind you lies your studies. Ahead of you lies your career. At such a point of transition, it is customary to reflect on the journey thus far and the journey ahead. Let me offer eight life attributes that may assist. To achieve alliteration, these attributes all begin with the letter “E”.

Education

Let me commence with education. Through your years of study, you have learnt a great deal. You have learnt substantive knowledge in your discipline. You have also learnt how to think in your discipline.

As you graduate, it may be tempting to rest on your laurels. Resist this temptation. Learning is a lifelong journey. Socrates observed that “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” Your studies have kindled the flame of learning. Your task is to continue filling the vessel of knowledge.

Western Sydney University offers many opportunities to continue your formal learning with graduate and postgraduate studies.

But do not limit yourself to formal learning. Let curiosity be your guide to lifelong learning. Mark Twain, an aphorism encyclopedia, advised: “Never let formal education get in the way of your learning”.

Energy

When we start a new phase in our life, or a new task, we have more energy. Adrenaline is pumping; we feel alert and alive. Then our energy drains. Enervation sets in. Of course, this is natural. We cannot stay hyperactive for long.

But recharging our energy is important. Energy sparks enthusiasm; enthusiasm sparks ideas. But for ideas to become action, energy is needed.

As the founder of Apple computer, Steve Jobs, remarked, “Ideas without action aren’t ideas – they’re regrets.” Do not have regrets. Be like French singer, Edith Piaf, “Non, je ne regrette rien”, “No, I do not regret anything.” Remain energised and active.

Excellence

To what end should our energy and action be directed? The answer is excellence. Excellence in all we think, all we do, all we are. It might be cliché, but St. Jerome’s exhortation still resonates: “Good, better, best. Never let it rest. ‘Til your good is better and your better is best.” Excellence is both a journey and a destination to which we ought to strive.

Economics

St. Jerome’s saying is invoked by businesses competing in the marketplace. For most of us, the marketplace is where we work. We are involved in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Our work is orientated towards achieving the economic goals of our employer. This might be the government, the legal sector or the corporate sector. The primary economic goal will be economic growth, maximising economic wealth.

But endless economic growth is a zero-sum game: one person’s gain is another’s loss, so the net change in wealth is zero. The “other” who loses is not only other people, but also the planet.

British economist Edward Schumacher warned, back in 1973, that bigger is not better. The title of his book encapsulated this call to action: “Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered.” Schumacher argued that the modern economy is unsustainable. Natural resources are treated as expendable income when they should be treated as capital. He issued an early call for sustainable development, development that respects both people and planet.

This call for sustainable development has been repeated. The Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 is one. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 is another.

We can all play our part – small though that may be – in striving in our workplace for sustainable development, adapting the means and ends of production to benefit both people

and planet. Western Sydney University is an exemplar. The University has been named as 1st worldwide in its commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Ethics

This goal of sustainable development is an ethical one. Ethics refers to the moral principles that govern people's behaviour. We need ethics in our work and life. Ethics are our moral compass, directing us towards what is right and away from what is wrong.

Our professional and technical knowledge answers many questions in our work life. But it does not answer the critical question of what ought to be done. Here, ethics assists. We need to be ever conscious of the "ought" question. Recently, in a legal article, I encouraged lawyers to be climate conscious in their lawyering – to be aware of and act ethically in relation to the climate crisis that threatens the planet and its people.

There is always scope to think and act ethically in our work life. The Pritzker Prize winning, Australian architect, Glenn Murcutt's architectural mantra is to "touch the earth lightly". This involves respecting and working with nature. Indigenous fashion designer, Denni Francisco, with her award-winning fashion label Ngali, embraces what she refers to as "Yindymarra" philosophy. This means to show respect and be thoughtful, kind and gentle, to Country and people.

Equity

To respect the planet and its people is to show solidarity. Solidarity involves asking not what others can do for you, but what you can do for others, to adapt John F Kennedy's inaugural Presidential address in 1961. It involves equity: equity within this generation (intra-generational equity), equity with future generations (inter-generational equity) and equity with the non-human world (inter-species equity).

To accord equity in these ways is to uphold justice. We should all strive to be agents of justice. This involves being agents of change. Here, education assists. As Nelson Mandela exhorted, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Through education, we can work towards an equitable and just world for all.

Equity and justice are central to Western Sydney University's commitment to the SDGs. As the Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Barney Glover AO noted: "Social justice, inclusive education, addressing inequality, environmental stewardship and resilience - these are all core to our mission."

Enjoyment

All this talk of what we ought to do is apt to be overwhelming and exhausting. We also need to make time for enjoyment, for a little fun. We need to achieve a “work-life balance.” We need to create, but also recreate.

You may have heard people use the Latin phrase, “*carpe diem*.” That was the catch cry of actor Robin Williams playing the role of English teacher, John Keating, in the movie “Dead Poets Society”. “*Carpe diem*” is commonly translated as being “seize the day”. But that is not the literal meaning.

The phrase is taken from Roman poet Horace’s poem, *Odes*. Seen in the context of his poem, “*carpe diem*” is more accurately translated as “plucking the day”. It is a horticultural metaphor, of plucking and gathering ripening fruits or flowers. It calls for us to enjoy a moment rooted in the sensory experience of nature. The same idea is expressed by poet Robert Herrick: “Gather ye rose buds while ye may.” Or simpler still, as my esteemed barristers’ clerk, Paul Daley, reminded me, “Take time to smell the roses”.

Elation

This brings me to my final word, elation. This is probably the feeling you now have hearing that I have reached my final word. But I use the word for a different purpose.

You should be elated with your achievement in successfully completing your studies and graduating today. Take a moment to congratulate yourself. Don’t just be delighted, be elated.

And go forth after this graduation ceremony and celebrate in style. You have earned it.