

Dear Rector, Madam Dean, Distinguished University Leadership, and Dear Students!

First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here on behalf of by my employer, ExxonMobil, and to greet the graduate students.

A few days ago, when I thought about what I was going to tell you, two things came to mind. First, when I sat in the ranks of graduates, I never thought that I would ever give a graduation speech. The second is that I have never spoke before in front of such a large audience in Hungarian.

There are several reasons why I thought this is important to mention.

First of all, let me answer why I didn't speak in front of a larger audience in Hungarian until today; even though I have had quite a few speeches and also kept several trainings thru my working life.

Never making a speech on my mother tongue, for me, this is the most obvious proof that we live and work in a global environment where everyone has different native languages and where cultures are mixing. In recent years, the world has opened up to everyone.

When I entered the gate of ExxonMobil many years ago, the world opened for me. Suddenly I found myself in a multinational environment where some of my close colleagues were from abroad, where it is natural to have a video conference with our Melbourne partners in the morning and then at the end of the day a virtual workshop with our American colleagues. I became conscious of the differences between cultures, such as being hugged by an American when you met, while with a long-time not meet Dutch colleague you're giving three kisses straight away. Still, sadly, the famous Hungarian dessert called Túró Rudi is still seemed as no go for most of my foreign friends so much that they does not even want to taste it.

Staying on a bit more serious topics ... In this big open world, everyone has lot of opportunity to meet and learn about other cultures, other nations, how they work, debate, negotiate, build up a good cause, or achieve success. And if we take the time and observe the differences and look at what works, we can build on best practices.

With all this, I would like to say that it is NOW the most exciting time TODAY to enter the working world, because the possibilities are endless. For me, back in time, the multinational environment opened up the world but today you can go in the direction which you want. You can start a career with a multinational company like I did, but you have the opportunity to work for a local company, or you can even start your own start-up with leveraging on a good idea and experience of other companies. It's all up to you and what you will do with the opportunities around and how you use the knowledge you gained at the university.

I also mentioned that I never thought I was going to give a speech at the Graduate School (or any other forum). Unlike many of you, I did not have a planned career path, a plan for what to do with my degree in economics. You probably have a lot more plans, more concrete ideas, thanks to the various programs at the university, the job fairs, where you have a glimpse of what it means to work and what it means to build a conscious career. I can only suggest to you, be aware and know what and how you want to achieve, but do not be afraid to deviate from the plan if that is the case. Often, the very first step you consider will take you forward. Don't be afraid to walk the path and take on the simplest tasks. You can learn the most from these and often help to develop, make interesting and better tasks.

If you have a plan, you may already have an idea of where and how to get all what you've learned at the university into motion in the real life. Nonetheless, I can assure you that there will be many "aha" moments when you realize the practical benefits of a micro- or macroeconomic item, when it suddenly becomes clear why you were learning where the assets are in the balance sheet, as well as how to use statistical calculation. And even if you may think today that you have completed a lifetime of learning, there will certainly a time when you want to go back to school to backup your practical learnings with theoretical knowledge.

To sum up, the most important tips I can give are:

- take every opportunity, even if it seems like a detour at first. There is something to be learned from everything, and perhaps such a detour will lead to a new dream and career.
- Be open to the world, enjoy the opportunities of a global society, learn and master what others are doing well.
- And never say no to a little more learning.

Congratulations to all graduates, and good luck!

Thank you for your attention.

Zsuzsanna Schlies