

**GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR THE CONFERMENT OF  
UNIVERSITY AWARDS HELD ON TUESDAY 11 APRIL 2017 AT THE  
PAUL OCTAVE WIEHE AUDITORIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY**

**Dr. Louis Jean Claude Autrey, Chancellor**

**Professor Dhanjay Jhurry, Vice Chancellor,**

**Members of the Congregation**

**Distinguished academics**

**Distinguished guests**

**Graduands**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

1. I wish to thank the Chancellor and the administration of the University of Mauritius for the honour given to me to speak at this prestigious graduation ceremony and for giving me such a warm welcome. I am all the more happy and overwhelmed to be here because as an Alumnus myself, I have an emotional attachment with this University.
2. Let me start by offering my congratulations to all the graduands assembled here today in this august auditorium. Soon you will receive a well-deserved certificate that will be the key to open doors for your better future and a more fulfilling life.
3. This ceremony is designed to mark the end of one chapter in the book of your life and the beginning of a new one. This process of self development

through education should continue throughout life adding more and more chapters.

4. Education doesn't stop after you graduate from University. It doesn't stop after you finish your first degree or even after post-graduation. Newton Baker, famous American lawyer and political leader, rightly said "The person who graduates then stops learning is uneducated the day after that".
5. Degrees and credentials are important, but the development of character and personality through soft skills—skills that are more social than technical—are attributes of well-groomed and productive citizens that will, for the country, constitute a dynamic and highly productive workforce which is always in high demand.
6. Hard skills, that's knowledge and technical skills for jobs, vary, but the same soft skills cut across and are required for every job. Soft skills are extremely valuable. Companies seek candidates with both types of skills when hiring for most positions. That's because if you have a negative attitude and can't get along with others, or you don't communicate well, you don't work well as part of a team, and aren't able to think creatively and critically, it will not matter how well educated and qualified you are – chances are you won't be successful in your career and life in general.
7. Employers value employability skills, because these are linked to how you get along with co-workers and customers, how you perform in the job and how successful you become.

8. In order to be more highly performing and more successful, new entrants in the job must have some basic soft employability skills to complement their academic qualifications. These would include: communication skills, interpersonal skills, strong work ethic, adaptability and emotional intelligence.
9. To-day marks an important day in your life. It's just the beginning of a long journey. While you celebrate your academic achievements this afternoon, I urge you to continue your quest for knowledge. Discipline is important. Indeed self-discipline should remain the key to your success. With the right attitude, discipline and coupled with principled behaviour and values, there is no reason why you will not succeed in life. I will request you to cherish every moment of your life
10. Graduation is a day of rejoicing for parents and all others who have contributed directly or indirectly to the success of the graduand. Your parents and relatives have loved, nurtured, guided and entertained you since you were born. Their support has helped made this graduation possible. They also showed you how to forge relationships outside your family group. So, parents and relatives I salute you, you have a part in the success of the student and have the right to celebrate to-day.
11. Dear Graduands, the relationships you formed with lecturers and fellow students will have given you a huge amount of love and support. Let me seize this opportunity to invite you to join the Alumni Association of the UOM, your Alma Mater, so as to keep in touch with the University and

contribute to the social life on the campus, especially the welfare of generations of students joining the University after you.

12. Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a great nation and we are rightly proud of our history. We are beneficiaries of the labour, the sacrifice and the courage of generations who came before us and who have built this Nation. To-day Mauritius is at the crossroads of its destiny to move from a higher middle income economy upward to a high income economy. As a service oriented economy, we heavily rely on our human capital to achieve this important milestone in our history. In 2016, our Human Capital Index as measured by the World Economic Forum was 66.53% ranking us 76th out of 130 economies in the world and 1st in Africa.

13. All indicators are in our favour for us to accomplish the Second Economic Miracle and Vision 2030 of the Government and to put Mauritius into the league of high income economies. However, unemployment and more particularly youth unemployment remains a major barrier for economic growth for Mauritius.

14. The National Employment Policy for Mauritius commissioned by the International Labour Organisation identified several causes for unemployment including Skills mismatch, lack of soft Employability skills and Soft skills in general.

15. Fortunately, dear graduands, your generation has everything it takes to lead this country toward a brighter future. I'm confident that you can make the

right choices -- toward cooperation and innovation and hope. You're not only better educated, you've been more exposed to the world, more exposed to other cultures. You're more diverse. The world is more interconnected than ever before, and it's becoming more connected every day. And today, with your smart phones you have access to more information than at any time in human history, at a touch of a button. You're also more environmentally conscious. In brief, you've got the tools to be leaders and I have much confidence in you and the youth in general.

16. Many of you, as you leave here to-day will be on the look-out for a job or for a better one. My proposition is that you need not only be a job seeker but you can also be a job creator. Yes, entrepreneurship has recently developed a new dimension on the international market. Mauritius, despite being small in size, has recognised the importance of entrepreneurship to its nation. Government and allied institution are encouraging a greater part of the population, especially the young generation to step in the business world with their own business ventures. Government has put in place various schemes to promote entrepreneurship and to boost the entrepreneurial culture in Mauritius. People, especially youngsters, are provided adequate support and training to improve their skills in order to familiarise themselves and become competent in entrepreneur activities.

17. My advice to you all is to follow your passion and stay true to yourself. Ask those basic questions: Who do I want to be? What inspires you? How do you want to give back?

18. Opportunities are here for the taking. Those who succeed are those who can transform any challenge into an opportunity and make a difference for the better.

Success is not something you pursue, success is something you attract by becoming an attractive person.

How does one become an attractive person? Well, it's by acquiring knowledge and developing character and personality. Develop the qualities of a true leader which are: self confidence, humility, patience, generosity, being able to listen and encourage and empower others.

Dare to dream and with hardwork, discipline and passion – any dream can become a reality.

To conclude, let me leave you with these eternal wisdom contained in the poem “If” of Rudyard Kipling, which if you try to adopt in your life as I have done you will enhance your chances of success.

*If you can dream and not make dreams your master.*

*If you can think and not make thoughts your aim*

*If you wait and not be tired of waiting*

*or being lied about, don't deal in lies.*

*If you can meet with triumph and disaster*

*and that those two imposters just the same.*

*If you can fill the unforgiving minute*

*with sixty seconds of distance run*

*yours in the earth and everything that's in it*

*And what is more*

*You'll be a man – my son. (end of quote).*

And should I add – you'll be a great lady, my girl.

I wish you all, all the best in your future life.

Thank you.

**Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, G.O.S.K.**  
**Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius**