

Isaac

Good afternoon, Chancellor, the vice-chancellor, Federation University staff, distinguished guests, family and friends, and more importantly my fellow graduates the class of 2017. Congratulations!!

Federation University of Australia thanks you, as a student from refugee background addressing this graduation ceremony I am so deeply humbled by the nomination. My standing here on this platform was pretty unlikely. I came to this country as a refugee 11 years ago from a war-torn country South Sudan, and I could barely speak a word of English. My education journey started under a tree in an Ethiopia refugee camp where I lived for 17 years with my family. Because of the generosity of this country, in 2006 I was granted a humanitarian refugee visa to come to Australia. Some of you might wonder how would that be possible for someone who does not speak English 11 years ago and now have completed a Master of Social. Well, in this country you don't have to come from well-educated family to success academically. In this country you don't have to come from rich family to go to university. And in this country my status as a refugee does not determine my success or failure. I have an equal right to choose what we I to be. And for those 11 years I choose the paths of education to be come a social worker.

To our family and friends, thank you for supporting us during our studies. It has been a long journey and you have always been by our side. Without your support many of us would have struggled to make it here today. My special thanks goes to those who contributed to my education achievement. My adopted mother Dr. Laurie Cosgrave, you were there from the start and you are here at the finish. To my uncle Ochan Wour Dol, without you I wouldn't be here. To Nyadoar and Nyabuom in whatever I do, you are the source of my strength. Andrew McCausland and Warrick Remilton thank you, I am so grateful for all your support during my studies.

On behalf of the graduates I would like to thank the Federation University teaching staff for their tireless support and sharing their extensive knowledge to help us make our dreams come true. From school of Arts, Humanities and Social Science Dr. Robert Townsend, Dr. Christina Sadowski and all the lecturers in different faculties. As you could see me stand here confidently and my fellow graduates holding their testamur proudly. It was because of your knowledge and wisdom you poured on us.

We will leave this University more confident, academically brighter and ready to contribute to our society and the world at large.

To you my fellow graduates, I would like to congratulate each and every one of you for your great achievement. I also congratulate those who have graduated from different campuses and different parts of the world under the umbrella of FedUni. I know we said it to ourselves many times, it was too hard, we will never finish, and we are not smart enough. Well today we all have proven it to ourselves that we have the determination, the courage, the motivation, the commitment and the drive to do what sometimes seems impossible.

With our educational achievement, we have earned the chance to walk the road to freedom and make of our lives what we want it to be. But remember this, despite our academic achievement our paths will not always be easy, and our way forward will not always be clear. In the real world, it doesn't matter how far we might rise. At some point we will stumble. Outside this building, it doesn't matter how high we raise the bar, at some point we will fail. But I want you to know this; there is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction. Your achievement today is evidence, you might fail one assignment or the whole unit, but now you have overcome that failure and graduated. If there comes a time in your life when you feel like failure, I want you to remind yourself that, you still have a choice to make, a choice to be a prisoner of our failure or a choice to regroup yourself and be an architect of your success.

And finally, I would like to finish by quoting the youngest Noble Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai she said "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." Federation University of Australia and the people of this great nation thank you for educating me. I am a one child from one village, it's my turn to go back to pass this knowledge on and change my village.

Thanks you and good luck to you my fellow graduates.