

Singapore Polytechnic 58th Graduation Ceremony

Mr Soh Wai Wah, Principle & Chief Executive Officer

Mr Lim Peng Hun, Deputy Principal (Academic)

Mr Hee Joh Liang, Deputy Principal (Development)

Dr Thomas Chai, Senior Director of Communication, Maths & the Sciences Cluster

Dr Adrian Yeo, Director of School of Chemical & Life Sciences

Staff of the Singapore Polytechnic,

Distinguished Guests,

Parents and Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly honoured to be back in Singapore Polytechnic (SP) to say a few words to the graduating classes of 2018 from the School of Chemical and Life Sciences. This brings back memories of when I stood in front of my graduating cohort 20 years ago to deliver my graduation speech. Today, I will share with you 5 values which have helped me in my own journey since I graduated from SP.

The first value is to know what you want to achieve. I had 2 goals when I was young: 1) to be an engineer, and 2) to study as far as possible in the education system. I knew that I wanted to become a chemical engineer at an early stage. The minimum qualification to fulfil my dream was a degree. In the 1990s, the only route to local university was through junior college, whereas the polytechnic route would require going to an overseas university. With the support of my family, I decided to join SP to get a head-start in chemical engineering. During the final year of my degree, I learnt of the opportunity to obtain a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Chemical Engineering. Imagine, I could fulfil another childhood dream! I eventually spent 4 years on research to receive my PhD. Holding fast to my dreams anchored me and helped in my decision making. I encourage you to find out what you want. Be willing to try new things and meet new people, who knows, the next person you talk to could help you find something you want! It is also important to have support, especially in life-changing decisions. To the family of the graduands, I thank you on the graduands' behalf for your support and sacrifice.

Next, I will delve into how building a strong foundation has helped me as my career progressed. Upon receiving my PhD, I decided to take a Process Engineering role in Shell Pulau Bukom. My first role required me to interact with operators of varying seniority and experience to understand the problems encountered so that I can use my engineering skills to troubleshoot and optimise operations. I learnt to be humble and patient through my interactions with them. As my career progressed, I picked up new skills which I keep in my toolbox and pull out for use when required.

For the third value, there are always ups and downs in life, how you view the downs and overcome them is very important. To overcome being so far away from home, I focused my attention on my studies, exposing myself to the arts scene and actively serving the Singaporean Students' community in the university. As a manager, I had to manage both people and asset. Asset is always easier to deal with. Managing people is a whole different ball game! I initially found it extremely difficult interacting with a large team. As I grew into my role, I became more comfortable leading my team. Nothing comes easily, so please put in the hard work! Parents and Family who are present, please do continue to give the graduands your support.

The fourth value is about the mindset to share your knowledge and make a difference in others' lives. I believe that it is up to an individual to put in the effort to succeed in whatever they do. This belief forms the foundation of how I interact with my staff, especially new members. When mistakes are made, I patiently point out areas of concern and work with the individual to look at how to improve. From polytechnic through to my university days, I spend time volunteering to help others. Nowadays, I am involved in the Nature Nurtures program which is a collaboration between Shell, National Parks Board, and Northlight School. Northlight School aims to help students "escape" their current situation through skilling them up with an education that will provide them with lifelong learning and employability. This program uses the environment as the setting for us to interact with the students to build their confidence and understanding of helping the environment, despite their challenging backgrounds. The satisfaction of helping the students succeed in their tasks and grow is amazing. Find out how you can make a difference in people's lives, who knows, it might change your life too!

The last value I will share is to enjoy what you are doing. As I reflect on my career, despite the many challenges I have overcome and foresee more to come, I realise that I enjoy

working in Bukom and want to make it a better place for both staff and company. My current role gives me an opportunity to make a difference and improve things for future generations! Enjoying what you do, extends outside of work too. To take my mind off work, I spend time playing with Lego and have found a group of colleagues who love Lego too. Whatever you eventually end up doing, make sure you enjoy it, otherwise try to find it!

I hope my sharing has given you a glimpse of what you can achieve if you put your heart and effort to it! Know what you want, build a strong foundation, persevere despite challenges, share your experience to make a difference and finally, enjoy what you are doing! My heartfelt congratulations to all the graduands for completing your diploma and wish you every success in your future endeavours! Thank you.