

GRADUATION CEREMONY - TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020

FACULTY OF LAW AND MANAGEMENT (PART IV)
CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Guest Speaker- Ingrid Bell Commencement Address for the University of
Mauritius

Chancellor, Dr Louis Jean Claude Autrey

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dhanjay Jhurry

Pro-Vice Chancellors

Members of the Congregation

Distinguished Academics

Distinguished Guests

Graduants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an immense honour and blessing to be here with you today.

In 2005 David Foster Wallace presented one of the most quoted commencement addresses of our time.

It started with an anecdote, and I quote:

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the opposite direction, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish look at each other and swims on for a bit, and then eventually one of them has the courage to ask the other "What is water?"

Powerful indeed. Here, Wallace reminds us that we often forget, take for granted, or overlook the most obvious things around us. That we are not aware of awareness.

*The real value of a real education has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness. A simple awareness, knowing that education does not stop after we graduate from university. It is knowing that the degree you are about to receive has **actual human value** instead of just a material payoff for all the effort you have put in over the last couple of years.*

*Charlie Munger, Vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, the conglomerate headed by Warren Buffett reminds us, that wisdom acquisition is a **moral duty**. It is a moral duty because it is only through continuous learning that we can add to the vast knowledge of mankind.*

Agreed, it has been extremely difficult to stay aware of what is happening in the world around us whilst having to focus on getting a degree in 2020. No doubt 2021 will present both significant challenges and opportunities too.

But it is important to note, we were challenged living in an increasingly multi-disciplinary world that required Big Data understanding, Creative Studies and Decision Sciences pre COVID-19. The pandemic simply added a new shape to our future – calling upon a new kind of student, graduate, professor, doctor, leader, employer, employee.

One who understands that awareness is an indispensable tool when it comes to innovation. Because ideas are born in awareness when we pay attention to what is happening around us.

- *When we understand, grasp, recognize, and are mindful of how others feel and why.*
- *When we are alert to changes in our immediate environment.*
- *When we become conscious of customer pain points.*
- *When we become attentive of what our competition is up to.*
- *When we become vigilant of how the internet of things is changing – and not for the good of its users – indecently this is where the NEW nuggets of innovation and law-making lies.*

Awareness is the cornerstone of strategic thinking, for creating an innovation mindset, for stimulating entrepreneurial alertness, to remain relevant.

*And then? We must have **courage** to ask, "What is water?"*

"Courage doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Courage means you don't let fear stop you." A powerful quote from Bethany Hamilton, an American professional surfer who survived a shark attack in which her left arm was bitten off and despite it all returned to professional surfing. A true fearless survivor, most responsive to change.

2020 is recognizing that the game has altered.

- *The rules? Different.*
- *The requirements? Different.*
- *The necessities? Being Aware. Pay Attention. Google it until you know the truth.*

To be on the pulse of disruption, requires courage. Charting new and potentially untapped territories requires courageous creativity. Awareness coupled with courageous creativity is ultimately the mechanism to being innovative.

Awareness. Being aware.

As aware as I am of the immense amount of human knowledge in the room, with the potential to create necessary transdisciplinary research projects. To collaborate and form strategic partnerships, creating never-thought-of-before industries and revenue streams to addresses the challenges of 2021 and beyond.

As David Foster Wallace asked back in 2005 – I leave you with these questions: What is your water? Mauritius, what is our water?