

# GRADUATION CEREMONY- MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2020

## FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES (PART I)

Guest Speaker Speech- L F Cheung Kai Suet (Ms)  
THE DIRECTOR OF STATISTICS

*Chancellor, Dr Louis Jean Claude Autrey*

*Vice-Chancellor Professor Dhanjay Jhurry*

*Pro-Vice Chancellors*

*Members of the Congregation*

*Distinguished academics*

*Distinguished guests*

*Graduands,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*A very good morning to you all.*

*I am very honoured to speak to you today at this graduation ceremony and to be part of your celebration.*

*Let me begin by saying congratulations to you, graduands of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity.*

*Today is your day, a day of great celebration, and yet the beginning of a new journey. You have been through long and intense academic years that can only be successful through hard work, and determination. The personal competencies that you have acquired during your years at the University - passion, commitment, determination, your enthusiasm to learn, to expand and to reach out to others, are as important as your academic studies.*

*I started my career at the Statistics Mauritius as a support staff, at the lowest level of the ladder, coming directly from college. At that time, things were different. There was only one university in Mauritius, and the fields of studies offered were limited. Those who wanted to pursue academic studies in statistics had to go abroad. But, like me, many could not afford to do so. We studied on our own with no tutors, and while working full-time. And it was not easy.*

*You must think about how lucky and blessed you are, to be able to benefit from high-level education with the support of your parents and tutors. So, hats off to the proud parents, and, to the tutors for their support, advice, and encouragement. Without them, you would not have been here today.*

*On the other hand, my generation (the generation of yesterday) has lived in a pre-determined society. Today, society is becoming more and more challenging and demanding – and not to mention the unexpected pandemic COVID-19. The latter has significantly transformed the social and economic environment worldwide within a short lapse of time, and brought unprecedented challenges. But remember that for all challenges, there are many many opportunities.*

*Even we, at Statistics Mauritius are not exempt from the consequences of the pandemic. During the lockdown, some of our operations stopped, including our face-to-face survey interviewing. Some of our data sources became non-operational, while our compilation methods had to be adapted.*

*But, at the same time, we need high-quality and timely data (if not real-time data) more urgently than ever before, in order to inform critical measures to save lives, rebuild our economy, and address the long-term impact of the Pandemic. The COVID was an eye-opener. It has brought many challenges, but with it opportunities.*

*Worldwide, with the pandemic, national statistical offices which have already started to modernize their business operations with innovative methods and data solutions are now accelerating the process. Others are exploring new solutions.*

*Just to mention two examples of statistical initiatives that stem from the COVID:*

- mobile phone data for human mobility indicators related to COVID-19 response, and*
- Scanner data for Price Indices (barcode prices from supermarkets).*

*At Statistics Mauritius, we are rethinking our business operations. We are looking at new ways of producing statistics within a 'new normal' with the help of international institutions.*

*All this to say, that you are a generation of opportunities and possibilities, amidst challenges. Your graduation opens new doors. Some of you will opt for further studies. Others will embrace a job and start a career. You would want to follow the path of your parents, your tutors or your role models. Some will probably join our office. But, whatever the choice you make, do it with conviction and with passion.*

*But, remember that career paths are not set forever. They are meant to change and grow, as you mature in your working life and as society evolves.*

*Many of you have visited our website, have downloaded our statistics in the course of your studies, or have approached Statistics Mauritius to get hold of our census and survey data for your research work. You are therefore, already aware of the importance, and of trust in official statistics.*

*Just to give you a simple example of the use and importance of statistics.*

*We recently lived a national lockdown due to the Coronavirus. During the lockdown, how many of us were, everyday, in front of our TV sets listening to press conferences of the COVID-19 committee? I am sure that most of us were, simply because we were interested to know about the number of new cases in our community; about the number of recoveries and deaths. These are statistics that we were waiting for, and that influence our behaviour.*

*At the global level, countries have been exchanging knowledge about the virus to take concerted measures to prevent contagions. In Mauritius, at the beginning of the pandemic, flight connections with early affected countries, namely Italy, were stopped. And, as other countries get contaminated, Government decided to close its frontiers, a decision taken based on statistics to protect the lives of its citizens.*

*There are of course, fake news and information, which need to be addressed.*

*Data will be important to you, as future professionals in the Social Sciences. You, as young professionals, need to be aware of the power of data, and to make good use of them to help in making informed decisions for the welfare of our country, today and in decades to come.*

*You should not underestimate your potentials. You are young and you are the future. Be ready to build a more kind, just, and beautiful society.*

*Let me end with a quote by Mandela:*

*“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived, it is the difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead”.*

*I wish you all the best in your future jobs and career.*

*Thank you for your attention.*

*16 November 2020*