THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Occasional Address
Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne, Tuesday 5 December 2017

Emeritus Professor Wayne Robinson
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Federation University Australia

'The Wonder of Science'

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, Faculty members, and especially, graduands in Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, families and friends,

I am deeply moved and greatly appreciate the honour the University has bestowed on me. It has particular significance as it's the fiftieth anniversary of being with my classmates in this very hall, Wilson Hall, receiving our degrees in 1967, yes that's 1967! Probably the year your grandparents graduated.

I am particularly delighted that some of my classmates, the class of 67, are here today who I'm sure, share the memories of 50 years ago.

And what a wonderful 50 years it has been, not only from a personal point of view, but more importantly from a scientific and professional point of view.

It has been a career filled with science; the excitement of discovery and sharing those discoveries with students and colleagues. It's accompanied by admiration of scientists who have made discoveries of monumental importance to the world at large. Scientific endeavour is truly a wonder.

Science is a wonder because of what it's achieved for the world, and you, the graduates of 2017, are poised to continue in that wonder of science.

Science is, and has been, the great driver of progress for the past 500 years. It has resulted in a progressive increase in the understanding of how the world works and how the universe works, and through this to the unifying laws of nature.

These laws of science have progressively increased the standard of living across the world. It is the process of the identification of a problem, posing questions that permit exploration of a problem and, in the best of all possible worlds, the discovery of a solution to the problem.

In my lifetime, science has changed the world, it continues to change the world; and will change the world in the future. Above all, the scientific approach has immeasurably changed the way we look at the world: from the origin and structure of the cosmos to the smallest living creature. From an understanding of animal and plant physiology and behaviour; of disease; of the principles of vaccination; to the care and welfare of individual creatures.

None of this would have taken place without using the scientific approach.

Closer to home, I am particularly proud to be a member of a profession that through science, has controlled or eradicated the most devastating of diseases. Diseases that previously ruined

lives and livelihoods, are now mostly a thing of the past. The same is true for the plant sciences through the control and eradication of diseases that wiped out the crops of nations.

We pay tribute each day to the achievements of the scientists in our fields of endeavour. These thousands of agricultural and veterinary scientists have provided us with a rich variety of readily available grains, fruit and vegetables, healthy livestock and a sophisticated approach to the health and well-being of our companion animals.

It is through the application of science and most significantly, through agricultural and veterinary science, that the world is a far, far, better place.

But it does not mean that the race is won and that all problems have been overcome. We know that existing and new plant and animal diseases will challenge both our minds and our resolve. There is still an immense amount for you, as tomorrow's leaders, to put your minds and hearts into. With your newly-minted degrees you are in an ideal position to take up the challenge.

So what can I offer you as words of advice and guidance to help you succeed in your chosen profession.

I'd like to firstly concentrate on what I think are your defining features as successful graduates. You have active, agile minds and have been enlightened, stimulated, engaged and excited during your university education. On this graduation day you now possess all the attributes that characterise a university graduate.

So what makes a university graduate so valuable to our nation and to the world at large?

Without question, it is the ability to think clearly and critically, to confront and solve unknown problems, to provide practical solutions to the issues of the day and finally to effectively communicate your informed view on how to approach and solve these issues.

But it is your high personal values that you bring to your professional and personal life that will guide the decisions that you will make every hour, every day, every week and every year.

I'd like to now move away from science and share with you some reflections on what may help you as you move through your career. I've found them to be valuable in my career and I know that they've been of value in the careers of others.

To start with, life is exciting. There is nothing as singularly stimulating as excitement, as excitement is absorbing. The excitement of discovery, the excitement of achievement, the excitement of knowing that you're needed by society.

So devote your best efforts to what absorbs and excites you. What stimulates your imagination, what satisfies your curiosity, what gives you fulfilment and what provides you with a sense of achievement. You have in your favour, the vigour of youth, which gives you the capacity to work hard and to be resilient.

And be daring. Remain open to and consider all possibilities and opportunities. Try not to close off avenues that on first glance look to be too daunting or too ambitious. Remember, that it's those who are daring who often find what they're looking for. Life will unfold before you. What you consider to be impossible today, will be possible tomorrow.

Retain your curiosity, not just in your discipline, but about life in general. Retain your curiosity about science and especially in your areas of expertise.

Take every opportunity to broaden your horizons. Travel, expand your experiences, explore other fields. Embrace the knowledge and expertise of others.

Actively learn on a daily basis. Ask yourself at the end of each day, what has today's experience told me? Not only in your discipline but across the wide span of life's experiences. By actively learning, you continuously and progressively build on your expertise. You will find that the harder you apply yourself to the task the easier it will become as time goes by.

And finally, take an optimistic approach to life. Look on the bright side of life. It's been said many times before that throughout the long sweep of human history, the optimists have been right more often than the pessimists.

So think about what excites and absorbs you, be daring, retain your curiosity, take advantage of every opportunity, broaden your horizons, learn from each day, build on your expertise, and work hard on being inclusive and compassionate.
This advice is, in every sense, advice on a manner of travelling. Margaret Runbeck, realised this when she said that 'happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a manner of travelling'.
So travel well.
Let me conclude by offering you my congratulations on your wonderful achievement and wish you all the very best in your future careers, knowing that you have been taught well, are possessed of the most beautiful minds and a have a spirit of awareness and adventure.

Citation - Doctor of Veterinary Science *honoris causa*

Emeritus Professor Wayne Robinson, over a span of 40 years, has made significant and sustained contributions to the advancement of knowledge in veterinary pathology and infectious disease, tertiary education and university leadership.

He has published over 150 articles including national and international journals, book chapters, and edited textbooks. He has advanced our knowledge of: the pathology and pathogenesis of cardiovascular diseases; the pathology, pathogenesis and epidemiology of retrovirus infections in three species; the clinical description, pathology and genetics of inherited canine chronic renal diseases; and, the pathologic characteristics of canine bone cancer and the correlation of these characteristics to clinical outcomes. This outstanding contribution was recognised through the receipt of the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award by the Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association. In addition, Professor Robinson's international recognition as an authority in the field of cardiovascular diseases resulted in an invitation to author the most comprehensive exposition of the diseases of the heart in four editions of the internationally renowned book, the Pathology of Domestic Animals.

Professor Robinson has made significant contributions to teaching and learning in undergraduate programs and postgraduate supervision. Broader contributions include editing the textbook, Clinicopathologic Principles for Veterinary Medicine published by Cambridge University Press in 1988, which brought to prominence the need for undergraduate veterinary students to understand the strong interrelationship between pathology and medicine. Its global acceptance, value and popularity is clear, and it remains in print today, almost thirty years later.

Professor Robinson has also made significant university leadership contributions. As Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Ballarat, now Federation University Australia, he led research including authoring and implementing the University's Research Plan. He has also made significant contributions to university-wide learning and teaching plans and their implementation at the University of Queensland and at Deakin University. More recently, he has continued his leadership in teaching and learning and research as Chair of the Academic Board at the Melbourne Institute of Technology and as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute.