



Department of Pharmacy
Faculty of Science

Commencement 2014
University Cultural Centre, Ceremony 13, 11 July 2014, 3pm

Commencement Address by
Ms Linda Seah

(Vice President, International Marketing, Emerging Asia, Baxter Healthcare Asia Pte Ltd)

Dean-Faculty of Science, Prof Shen Zuowei,
Distinguished guests,
Graduating Class of 2014,
Ladies and Gentleman,

I'm deeply honored to be back at my alma mater to be part of such a seminal moment in your lives. (I just want you to know that you all look really fantastic). I would like to especially congratulate parents, family and friends who are here. This is your day too. As a mother of 3 teenage children age 18-15 years, I truly appreciate what it means to graduate from university. To have reached this significant milestone means that you have survived many tough and high stake exams like the PSLE, A levels or IB exams and done very well in the process.

Graduating class of 2014, I ask that you hold on to this jubilant moment because you are about to enter a world that is changing at a furious pace. Twenty eight years ago when I was sitting on the same chair you are on, the Berlin Wall was impenetrable, global warming was unheard of, Japan was a daunting economy and China's GDP was just growing at 2%. In fact there were 2bil fewer people on the planet. Closer to home, one may never have imagined that SARS will re-write history or a riot will take place in peace times. So the world you are graduating into is a split screen world. One half of the world defies rationality. It is almost like a pent up eruption of irrationality and anger. Teachers having intimate relationships with young students, guns shooting on campus, weather changes causing catastrophic events were never seen before.

Take heart there is another world on that split screen and that's the world you are creating. This half of the split screen is an explosion of creativity, innovation, empathy and compassion. I would like to share with you some personal learning lessons I've picked up since graduating that may be helpful in your journey as you are creating this positive side of the world.

First is the need for wisdom.

There are many brilliant leaders in this world and today you are the most connected and engaged generation with incredible access to information and knowledge. The tragedies we face in recent times is that leaders make mistakes not due to their lack of intelligence or knowledge but due to the lack of wisdom. After all, leadership is about seeing the iceberg before the Titanic hits them. Wisdom has many facets. Fearlessness is a a very crucial component of wisdom. I learnt from Arianna Huffington of the famous Huffington Post that fearlessness is not the absence of fears but rather it is about not letting fear get in the way. When I started out in a junior sales role in a major Pharmaceutical giant, I fear rejection from the very healthcare professionals that I have to meet. Six months into the job, I was convinced that I made a wrong career move. Another fear I had was that I have no chance to succeed in a male dominated corporate world. With the benefit of hindsight, I'm glad that I made the right resolve of not letting fears get in the way. Today I could look back and say that, if Lehman Brothers were Bros *and* Sis may be it won't collapse!

I urge that you tap on wisdom by finding 'helpful animals' who can help or mentor you, very much like in a fairy tale. I recall a difficult work situation I once face with a very difficult supervisor whose profile was opposite to mine. In the process he wanted to sell the company and cause many job losses. Wisdom prevails in the end. Many colleagues saw the truth and voluntarily came forward to testify that the proposed decisions were crazy and irrational. I could not believe it one day when I was informed that he had been told to leave the company. I have many of such stories to share but suffice to say that till today I still keep in touch with all of my mentors who are icons in the healthcare industry including Mrs Pauline Ong ex- CEO of Guardian, Mr Liak CEO of Alexandra Health, Mr Kal Sundaram, CEO of Sun Pharma, Mr Stefan Ziegler, then Regional President of Novartis just to name a few. Throughout my whole career, I thank God and these mentors whose wisdom, advice and help shaped my life's journey.

Number 2 is your definition of success.

We are living in Singapore whose fundamental philosophy of meritocracy brought many successes to the country. Think about it, a meritocratic system is merely about a system in which people who are the luckiest in their health, in their genetic endowment , luckiest in their family support and encouragement, have it in her genes great intellect, career opportunities etc, lucky in so many ways are the folks who reap the largest reward. So to be fair, those who are the luckiest also have the responsibility to work hard and to contribute to the betterment of the word. As the saying goes, much has been entrusted- more will be demanded. So I urge you to think about serving and sharing love with others less fortunate. Many of you are already serving in many different ways. It starts in the schools where you are incentivized to do community work through CIP points. But to have the real passion and heart, do it because you want to make a difference. One of my personal motto is 'Leave a legacy, make a difference' in

everything I do. There was no single magic bullet in my career except being guided by this motto throughout. Mr Gerard Ee who has a sterling career of volunteerism once shared with me that if you wake up every morning with a grateful heart, there will be space to do good every day. So I created time to serve on the Singapore Pharmacy Council for 10 years now and also the Singapore Association of Pharmaceutical Industry for 10 years, being the President in 2012-2014. I have also been fortunate to work in Companies who strongly believe in giving back to the community. Two years ago, my present company Baxter Healthcare went as a Company to build bicycles in Chiangmai. Words could not describe the joy of these children when they saw the bicycles. It was such a simple gift we took for granted here. It brought tears to many of us.

Lastly life is unpredictable so be an agent of change.

Cynicism is poor substitute for critical thoughts and constructive actions. Many people around you are trying to do good things according to their own views and conscience. This moment in history demands that we stop waiting on others to solve problems and right wrongs. As you are leaving university life please don't wait for leaders on a white horse to save us. Instead turn to the leader in the mirror. Tap into your own leadership potential because our world desperately needs you.

Graduating class of 2014, risk and fail many time along the way to success and do it all with more balance, more joy, more leisure and more gratitude. Enjoy the moment. Congratulations once again and give yourself a big round of applause! Thank You!

-THE END-

Biography of Ms Linda Seah

Ms Linda Seah is Vice President, International Marketing, Emerging Asia at Baxter Healthcare Asia Pte Ltd, an international medical products and services company with expertise in medical devices, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.

A graduate from NUS Pharmacy Department, Ms Seah also holds a Postgraduate qualification in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK, where she was awarded a Bronze Medal for meritorious performance.

Ms Seah has more than 20 years of successful track record in corporate leadership roles in major Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry. An effective change agent, she successfully led two major mergers and acquisitions by re-designing and transforming key strategies for the newly-merged companies, resulting in vastly improved financial performance.

As the current President of the Singapore Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (SAPI), she has played an active and leading role in improving collaboration between pharmacists across different healthcare sectors in Singapore. Under her leadership, SAPI was also awarded the Excellent Stakeholder and Partnership Award for its effort in collaborating with the Health Science Authority (HAS) to formulate regulatory reforms in the country.

For her outstanding contributions to her profession, Ms Seah has been conferred the 2015 Women Leadership Achievement Award by the 2nd World Women Leadership Congress for “Outstanding Women Professionals who have the vision, flair, acumen and professionalism to demonstrate excellent leadership and management skills in an organisation, making changes and achieving results”. In 2012, she also received the Ministry of Health’s Service Recognition Award for 10 years of continuous service as a Board Member of the Singapore Pharmacy Council.