

CONGREGATIONAL SPEECH – GRADUATION OF COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

GUEST SPEAKER – LINDA SAARA SELBY

FRIDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 2019 (MORNING SESSION)

Good morning,

Chairman and Members of the University Council, the Vice Chancellor, Pro- Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Provost of the College of Humanities, Deans, Members of the College Advisory Board, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Directors, Niimeh and Naameh, Specially Invited Guests, Parents, Family, friends and the Graduates. In the first place I wish to state that I was pleasantly surprised and humbled when I received the invitation to be part of this august occasion and particularly to deliver a speech. Having overcome my surprise and anxiety I accepted to be here with you today and I feel privileged.

I take this opportunity to congratulate each one of you graduating today.

Indeed, it brings back great memories of myself as a graduating student in 2003, after five years of study. I was excited at the thought of going out into the world to pursue a career. But if you ask me what was the message delivered by the Guest Speaker that day, I am sure I was too excited to remember or perhaps to even have noticed when the speaker had left the podium after his speech. But today, I crave your rapt attention so that at least each one of us would go home with one lesson.

Since I got this invitation to speak to you, various topics have been flooding my thoughts but eventually I settled on one. For all of you graduating today, I believe that the greater majority will be pursuing their career goals while some of you will opt to pursue further courses and degrees. But be it as it may there are very important lessons that you will need to carry along wherever you find yourself if you want to be ahead of the peers. Today each of us has acquired a certificate in one specialty or another but whatever certificates we have, it is important to keep it at the backs of our minds that there are several others like us in the same job market with comparable skills set.

Literature has it that there are two sets of skills we need to excel to make a difference in our various spheres of life. These are the **“Hard”** and **“Soft”** skills. The hard skills comprise academic skills, experience and levels of expertise. These constitute 15% while the remaining 85% stems from our softs skills which will be the focus of my message this morning.

I would like to share my personal experience as a panelist who interviewed graduates for a Management Trainee position in a reputable private company. A little over sixty applications were received and these numbers were pruned down to ten after an aptitude test. Eventually, three candidates who formed the crème de la crème were selected for the final interview. All three were supposed to be seated latest by 7:45am on the day of the interview, which they all promptly did. They were professionally dressed and looked visibly excited being part of the final list. During the review of CV's, what we noticed which was coincidentally common on their CV's was that each of them had **“exhibition of a sense of ownership”** as part of other positive traits.

As panelists, we needed to confirm which of these finalists would truly exhibit a sense of ownership when given the nod. At exactly 7:55am on that fateful morning, an officer from the HR Department walked in to welcome them and to notify them of the sudden breakdown of the elevator hence the need for each of them to use a particular walkway to the interview room which was two floors away. Each candidate was to spend a maximum of five minutes with the panel. Unknown to the candidates, on the second floor and close to the interview room, was a hand washing sink where the tap had deliberately been left flowing. Meanwhile, the cameras on the various floors were actively working.

The first two candidates went through to the interview room one after the other when it was their turn. They each saw the running tap but glaringly walked past to the interview room. The first candidate spent a few seconds in front of a mirror right beside the sink to adjust his tie before proceeding to the interview room. The second candidate paused for a second and muttered something to himself. Perhaps he was rehearsing how he would greet or introduce himself to the panel.

On reaching the second floor, when it was her turn, the third candidate who also saw the tap flowing, stopped to turn it off before proceeding to the interview room.

Which of these candidates had indeed exhibited a sense of ownership?

After the interview session, all three candidates were invited to meet with the panel and to find out which of them had been selected as the best candidate for the role. Each of them had exceeded the required pass mark but before the candidate of choice could be announced, a short video had to be watched. The video showed how each of them had walked through the corridors to the interview room and their reaction to the visibly flowing tap. As a panel, we were very detailed in our search not only for hard skills but also soft skills, hence the decision to record every stage of the interview right from the very time the candidates entered our premises.

In the end the third candidate was selected because her reaction to the environment was a true reflection of the exhibition of a sense of ownership as was captured on her CV.

Graduates, this is a typical example of what soft skills encapsulate. These soft skills could be inherent or acquired. It ranges from an exhibition of team spirit, communication skills, interpersonal skills, work ethics, sense of courteousness, adaptability, problem solving skills, confidence, presentational skill, time management, ability to listen, knowing when to speak and how to speak and what to speak about and in fact all the very little things we take for granted such as staying on our phones for long hours to the detriment of our work or studies.

Having acquired all the hard skills, let us remember that it is these soft skills that will separate us from our peers and propel us to the heights of the careers and various stages of social life that we dream of. In enhancing our soft skills, we learn precisely when to sympathize, empathize or criticize.

On this note, I would like to congratulate all you graduates once again. I wish you well in all your endeavours as you enter this wide world today

Congratulations! Felicitation! Ayekoo!