Convocation 2022: Student AddreSS

Michelle Davis

Good afternoon to all dignitaries, faculty, guests, family members and most importantly, to all fellow students. I respectfully acknowledge that we are fortunate to gather today on the land of the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa people which is also home to the Kinbasket people and I am grateful that we have had the opportunity to receive tuition, learn and today celebrate this very special occasion, in this territory. It is a privilege to stand before you and to represent the hundreds of students before us who epitomize resilience, tenacity, determination and unreserved strength. Today is the reward of the culmination of many (many, many!) hours of commitment to attending classes, reading, researching, preparing assignments, practicums, managing exam-and-pandemic anxiety. It is a day of celebration so richly deserved. However, it is also a day where we have the opportunity to pause, reflect, extend thanks and be grateful.

Think. Do. Become.

These 3 powerful words represent the College of the Rockies’ tagline. With exceptional devotion, expertise and attentiveness our instructors have afforded us personalized tuition that really has challenged us to *think*.

To *think* critically and ask challenging questions.

To push the boundaries on the monotony of our mind frameworks to broaden our perspective, knowledge and wisdom.

For the dedication to each student that is here, there is a college family of faculty, instructors, librarians, auxiliary staff, maintenance and service teams who have either overtly or indirectly been there to support our *think*ing and learning journey. On behalf of all the students, thank you to each of you for this commitment and for living out the value of personalized instruction that is Rocky Mountain Inspired and Small College Proud. We graduate today as proud students of a college unsurpassed.

Think. DO. Become.

To each of my fellow students, you have certainly embraced all that it means to *do*.

To study determinedly.

To, at times, sacrifice fun in aid of the long-term goal.

To continue with action to *do* the assignments, *do* the readings, attend the lectures, and to *do* it to completion.

To *do* it in honor of being able to complete your certificate or program and be here today.

No doubt you have done this not only with the support of your faculty but with the care and love of mentors, family, friends, and the very special Cranbrook community. Let’s take a moment to pause and *think* about all those who have enabled our ‘*do*ing.’ And give thanks to them today either silently now, or when you have a moment before this day is up.

Think. Do. BECOME.

The college and all those who have invested so deeply in our *thinking* and our *doing*, have laid the foundation for us to spring into *becoming*.

Today is the day that we *become* graduates.

We *become* proud alumni of an incomparably excellent College of the Rockies.

But *becoming* is a continual verb. It can never be complete. So with this, let us become stewards of this tagline, proudly living the college values to honor all that we have learnt throughout our time at the college. The greatest legacy we can take forward with us from the College of the Rockies is to approach each challenge, moment, engagement with another person, or opportunity with the axiom of pausing to think, choosing how we ‘*do*’ an action or how we respond such that we leave any moment that we have been a part of, as one that has the potential to *become* more.

*Become* kindness.

*Become* excellence.

*Become* the experience that can make a difference, leaving a story that inspires others and encourages them to create their own change.

Each of us who is here today has a story. Moments or journeys that have influenced us and crafted us into who we are. My personal passion is to curiously learn from others. From their stories, their resilience, successes and failures. Learning from others encourages new perspective in *thinkin*g, affords a different opportunity to *do* things differently in the world and to maybe, just maybe, share something that *becomes* an inspiration to another.

My story is that I am a South African. Sadly, a few years ago my father was brutally stabbed to death whilst innocently out on his morning run. This set in motion my story of why I am here in small town Cranbrook, BC studying Criminal and Social Justice in a developed country. In getting to this point there are so many people from whom I have learnt and who have inspired me to think differently and to strive to do things extraordinarily. In honor and thanks to them, I have penned down the gems of their stories that they have shared with me and which I believe are too precious not pass forward. I hope something resonates with you to take perhaps 1 or a few of these pearls with you into your next chapter of becoming.

It’s a small conglomeration entitled “Becoming” [in the written version, I have credited the persons whose thoughts I share (avoiding plagiarism is key!) but for ease of flow, those names have been omitted here].

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Becoming

Today we have *become* one of the privileged few to have an education. Let’s use it wisely; not with elitist privilege but to *become* curious. Let’s strive to be the one person in a room who has the most to learn (Mark Davis). We are the average of the 5 people we spend the most time with (Jim John) so let’s surround ourselves with wholesome people from whom we have the most to learn. My elementary school teacher promised me that each time you learn something new (Erica Kornau) the grooves in your brain get deeper so aim for a ‘groovy brain!’ (Elize Livingstone) Be a sponge, absorb as much as possible, embrace adventure and push yourself out of your comfort zone (Mark Davis).

*Become* a disciple of momentum (Dean Karnazes). Take a moment to think of the one College of the Rockies professor or ambassador who has lived a value that touched you. And be a disciple of momentum. Take that act of wisdom, kindness, generosity, tenacity, humility, insight and pass it forward. Live that value for others beyond the walls of the College. *Become* the College of the Rockies flame throughout Canada or wherever your path on this earth may take you.

If you receive what feels like criticism or offence, because we will, say thank you and ask how can I *become* an improvement of myself? (Alexi Pappas) How can I *become* more helpful to others? How can I engage with others to build them up? Use a mirror not in vanity, but for true self-reflection to *become* the best you can be. Not the best comparatively or competitively to others. But the best for your own excellence, improving incrementally, even if just by 1%. *Become* a servant to your own excellence (Michelle Davis).

Chase greatness. *Become* significant. Not famous. Just noteworthy. Be noticed. Be an inspiration of excellence (Gareth Whittaker). Be consistent. Every day (Mark Davis). And when we fail, because we will, go gently not trying to retrieve lost time, but focusing on what is still to be learnt and gained (Mark Davis). Fail forward. See failure as an opportunity to play, to innovate to change. And when we’re scared, jump and find our wings on the way down (John Maxwell).

Look to nature for lessons. For comfort. For refuel (Dad). Wherever you tread, acknowledge the land and those who are the custodians of its keep (Ktunaxa Nation Council). *Become* aligned with nature’s rhythms for this is the art of being a human *being* not a human *doing*.

Give. Lovingly, abundantly and wholeheartedly. Be kind- starting with yourself remembering that if the world were to hear the self critical voice in your head, you’d likely be considered the most cruel person on earth (Mom). Volunteer. What can you donate of your time (Kristyann Diotte), your essence, your being, your talents to be there for another (Julie Robinson)? Have gratitude. In everything. For everything. Never forget the power of a smile or the warmth in the 2 words of ‘thank you’ (Sonet Erasmus). *Become* the lived expression of gratitude.

Remember that ‘hurt people, hurt people’ (Avery Hulbert). Arrest your judgmental mind and dial into the opposite thought to counter a different possibility (Jan White). This is the art of *becoming* and living the word empathy.

When anxiety cripples you, remember that mood follows action (Brad Stulberg lived by Mark Davis). Tragedy and heartache may be inevitable. Try to feel into it without denial (Mom) looking upwards and outwards to what gift or opportunity it affords. Make something of it to *become* an inspiration for others to learn. And grow.

In short, Think. Do. Become. Think, consciously and wisely. Do, proudly and excellently. Become your own legacy of pride.

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Congratulations to each of you on this significant day of *becoming*. May today be but one step of many in the story of your life’s success.

Here’s to you each of you!

Thank you and congratulations.