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2. Enable students to develop critical, integrative, and creative thinking skills and to make connections among domains of knowledge.

3. Facilitate engagement of students in applied and other research collaboration with the finest research faculty as learners and teachers in the scholarly community.

4. Provide mentoring and internship experiences to complement and enrich the knowledge acquired in the classroom and through research collaboration.

5. Offer scope for service learning engagement as a way to build bridges between domains of knowledge and service activity that enhances civic responsibility.

6. Foster a sense of community among students and faculty as citizens with special talents and responsibilities to self, the scholarly community, and society.
The Call for a Life Dedicated to Service in the Cause of Humanity

by The Honorable Dr. Harold H. Robertson
Consul General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Miami
Member of The Honors College Community Advisory Board

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The Call to Service

The call is for a life dedicated to service in the cause of humanity. That does not mean a life of endless self deprivation or self-inflicted poverty: it means simply that our actions should be guided to a large measure by an understanding that we are all passengers on the same vessel, heading in one direction and everything we do, wherever we are is interlinked. We have become what one calypso singer in my native Trinidad and Tobago called the “brotherhood of the boat.”

Tonight, as you stand on the threshold of venturing into the rest of your life, whatever activity or profession you eventually follow, my wish is for you to have a life of rich fulfillment, personal satisfaction and happiness. I will say, however, that such fulfillment, satisfaction and happiness will not come through a life devoted solely to acquisition. A life lived only to amass the largest bank account, to build the largest, most luxurious house; to drive the flashiest car will inevitably prove empty and unsatisfying. Your greatest fulfillment will come through serving the common weal for the upliftment of all with whom you come into contact.

Once again, as before, Kipling captured that sense when he warned his countrymen in terms as relevant now as they were then:

For when the one great scorer comes
To write against your name;
He marks not that you won or lost, But
how you played the game.

I thank you for the honor you have bestowed upon me and my country by allowing me to share these thoughts with you tonight.
Students of history will recall that the period between 1945, the end of the last world war, and 1990, the virtual disintegration of the U.S.S.R., constituted a period known as the Cold War. The characteristic of the era was the struggle, waged on several fronts, between democratic capitalism and the socialist world. Two poles of power existed. That period was a divergence from the historical norm, in which one country or civilization has tended to hold dominion. From the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, to the Roman Empire and down to the 19th century British, one power has generally held sway over international affairs.

Today’s reality therefore is simply a reversion to the status quo ante bellum. What therefore does history tell us? It tells us that having reached the zenith of their power and influence, empires begin to decline. That decline may be painful and prolonged or it may be swift - but they decline. At the turn of the 20th century the British public was drunk with the power of the Empire upon which the sun never set. Yet the British people to count upon themselves alone - in splendid isolation, surrounded by our Empire, one power has generally held away from the historical norm, in which one country of power existed. That period was a divergence capitalism and the socialist world. Two poles constituted a period known as the Cold War.

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Today’s superpower dispatches “smart bombs” which leave buildings and structures intact while killing the humans in and around them; Far-flung, the navies patrol the world; nuclear power is concentrated in the hands of the few. And yet do Chamberlain’s words hold a message? “We are the most hated nation of the world and also the best loved.” A country that exists in “splendid isolation” except for “our kinsfolk” - a coalition of the willing perhaps. And then Kipling “Lo, all our pomp of yesterday are one with Nineveh and Tyre.”

This, therefore, is the world that you will be called upon to rescue. The global village in which over 50% of the population exists on less than one dollar per day; where 75% of its people know nothing of bank accounts, check books, ATM’s and other conveniences which we imagine we cannot be without; a global village where illiteracy and malnutrition are rife, where diseases for which there are no cures ravage populations.

We, you and I, are part of the fortunate minority who are called upon to truly become citizens of the world with an awareness and a sense of caring for the world and all in it. Today more than ever the watchwords of the French Revolution resonate with relevance -- liberté, fraternité, égalité - liberty, brotherhood, equality. To these I will make bold to add others by which we can structure our lives -- patience, commitment, dedication, integrity, loyalty and passion for justice.

When I received the summons from Dean Griffith’s office to be the Guest Speaker at tonight’s ceremony, my first emotions were a mixture of dread, inadequacy, pride and confusion. As the recently installed President of my own country remarked when asked about his reaction to the request to become Head of State “It is an honor as humbling in its exaltation as it is daunting in its commandment.”

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Second - Commencement - Why is it called Commencement anyway? Why do we speak of commencement when we are celebrating the end of a course of study? The distinguished artist and graduate of the Honors College Leda Victoria Gitman provides an insight when she defined the experience of the Honors College as “the beginning of a life-long journey. . . it teaches us to be thinking travelers in this long journey of life.” This occasion then marks not so much the end of a period of formal learning but, rather, a beginning your commencement, your entry, into another phase of your individual existence as you travel the long journey of life.

It is in that context that I have cobbled together a few thoughts on issues of immediate and future concern as well as a single exhortation which hopefully will make some kind of sense on this occasion.

Wind of Change

Some forty-three years ago, in a seminal address to the South African Parliament in Cape Town, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain Harold Mc Millan warned his audience about the “Wind of Change,” that was blowing through the continent and the world. Kwame Nkrumah went further - the wind in his view was “no ordinary wind, but a raging hurricane.” How much more applicable are those words to today’s world. Confronted as it is by a never-ending hurricane of change - change which can either overwhelm and therefore sweep us aside or which can be harnessed and channeled for the benefit of all mankind. That challenge is one which Sir Shridath Ramphal, former Commonwealth Secretary General and current Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, defined many years ago as that of using our past experiences to enrich all men and women of all nations, to nurture the perception that we have only one world the bounties of which we have to learn to share more equitably, to dedicate ourselves as he put it to our inseparable humanity.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Benjamin Barber, author of Jihad vs Mc World, defining the role of higher education, espouses the view that the classroom is the birthplace of the global citizen, the place where young people are prepared to become responsible citizens.
of the world of the 21st century. One world, inseparable humanity, global citizen, do we discern a pattern here? Since when did we evolve from being citizens of nations to citizens of the world?

Actually the evidence has been there for all to see. The great continents of Europe, Africa and the Americas had been bound together for centuries in an inhuman triangle of exploitation, the repercussions of which are still being felt today. Over time others also joined that international system, so much so that by the 1970’s Marshall Mc Luhan could pen the phrase which has passed into the common lexicon - “global village.” But what does it mean? It means a crisis in Venezuela having reverberations in the United States. It means a citizen of the United States, of Cuban origin, driving a Japanese car flying an American Flag. The concept has perhaps been best articulated by the late Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, who in her unforgettable address to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Environment noted that, “life is one and the world is one and all questions are inter-linked.... All countries must unite in overall endeavor. There is no alternative to a co-operative approach on a global scale to the entire spectrum of our problems.”

And yet - today we are faced with the contradictory reality of the fission of previously unified countries into sub-dividing into a multiplicity of smaller nation states while on the other hand economic forces are conspiring to compel these same countries to come together in large, regional economic blocks for their very survival. All this while the one superpower works assiduously to undermine the international system which has served the world with dignity and diligence since the end of the second world war. You, members of this graduating class are therefore challenged by problems old and problems new. Classical philosophers wrestled with questions surrounding the nature of man, more especially man in his natural state. One view posited that man was essentially barbaric, venal and evil, tendencies which were kept in check by the combination of fear of the unknown and laws, rules, regulations and conventions, written and unwritten, which had been devised by society for its own protection.

Morality and Ethics

Conversely, the other view held that man was by nature a creature of structure, order and inherent goodness which was why the minority, who deviated from the norm faced an array of sanctions, depending upon the nature and seriousness of the infraction. The question essentially is one of morality and ethics. You too will face modern and postmodern situations which speak to these and other unresolved issues.

What for example will be your reaction to future ENRON’S, Worldcom’s, Arthur Andersen’s - and other examples of corruption where the venality of the few exploit the gullibility of the majority. Creative accounting serving only to enrich the rich while sending the poor into destitution. Moreover, these are not merely individual aberrations of a misguided few. Have you been keeping the score? TYCO has collapsed under the weight of its malfeasance; Rank Xerox has admitted to accounting misrepresentations; AOL is currently under investigation; Citigroup and First Boston Swisse have been accused of “perpetrating the largest fraud ever on the investing public.” Health South is also alleged to have committed a huge accounting fraud that has left the company teetering on the edge of bankruptcy thereby placing millions of ordinary citizens who had purchased health insurance from the company devoid of coverage.

Who knows what else may be discovered but it is not only among the private sector that these activities are taking place. The “pork barrel” is the subject of many political tales, some true, some untrue. Even in our current broad area of residence there are accusations of a variety of transgressions ranging from mishandling of public funds, to cronyism, graft and outright theft. Clearly the cancer of corruption is not the sole preserve of the developing world.

For every despot or dictator despoiling a national treasury there is the counterbalance of the corrupt Corporation, engorging itself at the expense of the ordinary shareholders, many of whom see their life’s savings reduced to nothingness as shares tank and investment drowns in the new sea of red ink, which previously was glossy black. As regulators strive to restore integrity to the stock and financial systems and markets, which side will you be on?

Another issue embraces the realm of human reproduction. Some months ago a minor religious group shocked the world with a claim to have cloned a human being. No proof or identity has been advanced and the controversy appears to have died. But can it be long before more credible claims emerge as the technolgy and procedures which produced Dolly the Sheep, inexorably, addresses human applications. Already experiments are underway to produce human replacement organs grown in animals. The day will come when each of you will have the option of creating an identical replica of yourself, thus eliminating nature’s random selection. What are the implications for medical and health care, for demographic structure of countries, for relations and relationships between man and woman?

Yet another matter for concern is the intrusion of the state into the lives of its citizens - usually under the guise of national security. As The Economist of January 25 - 31, 2003 notes, “Governments around the world are moving to record their own transactions and provision of services to their citizens electronically.” On the surface this is a good thing. But wait - what this means is that governmental monitoring of telephone calls, voice mail, e-mail and computer usage is easier and more widespread than ever before. Thus, it is more than likely that issues pertaining to privacy of the individual may become some of the most contentious and troublesome matters to engage the attention of civil society. Perhaps, the Orwellian nightmare is at hand.

Finally, and here within these hallowed chambers of academia characterized by freedom of thought and expression, I wish to remove my diplomatic chapeau and speak with the eye of the historian that is my academic training. For if the global financial, technological and moral systems are in turmoil, what is the state of those set of rules, regulations and conventions which have guided international relations between the world’s nations since the end of the second world war and which had led the world’s nations to accept and acknowledge responsibility for their actions. Sadly, here too is a challenge for all of us. In today’s global village the collective wisdom of the many is in grave danger of marginalization, cast aside by the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty. From issues pertaining to the environment, to population planning to the will of the mighty.
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History Speaking to Us
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