Speech: Vice-Chancellor’s Scholarship Presentation Ceremony

Vice-Chancellor Professor Linda Kristjanson

Friday 20 April 2012

Scholarship recipients, parents, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour to warmly welcome you to Swinburne University of Technology this evening – with an especially warm welcome to the 15 young scholars who are the focus of our ceremony.

More than 100 years ago, Victorian Government Minister, business leader and philanthropist, George Swinburne, saw the need for an education facility that empowered, educated and inspired a new generation of workers. The Institution named in his honour always had a mission beyond the process of knowledge acquisition – aiming to leave a proud stamp on the lives of those who passed through its doors. Swinburne has always sought to provide an environment for transformation of one’s own fortunes – and in turn transformation of the fortunes of our communities.

As the years have passed, and Swinburne itself has been reinvented as Victoria’s specialised technological university, the range and breadth of our impact has grown – but our primary mission has remained the same.

Swinburne seeks to help every individual unlock the skills and capabilities required to transform their own lives and the lives of others in their community.

We do this by providing a dynamic environment devoted to excellence in both education and research. Swinburne has been regularly acknowledged as one of the top 500 universities in the world.

Our ranking among the top 100 in the field of Physics - and our overall placing in the top three per cent of universities in the world - is underpinned by our innovative approach to research development and quality education. As a relative newcomer to Swinburne, I have observed how this approach encourages our students and staff to remarkable achievements in the pursuit of new ideas and new discoveries – leveraging our extraordinary infrastructure and international partnerships to define new knowledge horizons.

Robust and meaningful linkages to the world are central to achieving this goal. Swinburne has forged strong partnerships with similarly progressive, technologically-advanced universities and research centres in the US, Europe and Asia. These partnerships result in a huge range of research projects as well as student and staff exchange and can deliver extraordinary results. For example:

- We are the only university outside the US to have live access to the world’s largest optical telescopes at the Keck Observatory in Hawaii, which can be controlled and monitored from a control room right here at Swinburne.
• We have an advanced solar facility, developed in a joint venture with the Victorian Government and one of China’s largest solar panel manufacturers, which appears destined to change the way the world produces power.

• We have one of the highest rates of student mobility in Australia, enabling students to study and work overseas as part of their degree bringing back essential skills and contacts to help the nation engage in the global economy.

Last but not least, we have you. As a Vice-Chancellor’s scholar, we know you will use your capacity to fulfil your own potential, not only in education, but in all aspects of your life – and in doing so, to make a contribution to your community and ultimately, to the world.

You have already demonstrated that you have the intellectual capacity and dedication required to achieve great things – but, to borrow a phrase from former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt; with great power comes great responsibility. The possession of ability does not in itself confer greatness to anybody – it is the application of an individual’s myriad of abilities and often the dedication to overcome weaknesses that makes a life truly great.

I would like to congratulate you then, on reaching this important milestone, but also encourage you to fulfil your responsibility to yourself by continuing to strive for fresh goals.

I also welcome you to the Swinburne family. We will continue to work hard to provide you with the best learning environment – one that supports and inspires you on your journey both professionally and personally.

In recognition of your achievements to date, and with anticipation of your achievements to come, it is therefore my pleasure to present the 2012 Vice-Chancellor’s Scholarships.