

Alumni Commencement Address

JKU Commencement Ceremony March 25, 2010

What I wish.

Especially today, I consider it is appropriate to phrase wishes for our future. Hence, I chose the topic of my address to be “What I wish.”

Treasured fellows,

I experienced my first academic ceremony at the age of four. It was my dad’s graduation, and I cannot remember much, other than I was a little bored. Twenty years later, in May 2007, I attended another academic ceremony. I very much appreciated that ceremony and resolved to deliver the alumni address at my own commencement. Now, the opportunity has arisen. Since then, for almost four years, I have been collecting thoughts for my address.

This gets us right to the first topic I would like to talk about—endurance and patience. In one of my first lectures, Professor Heinrich told us: “Education takes its time.” And we all know the saying “Rome wasn’t built in a day.” Some of us experienced a crisis during the early stage of our studies: “Should we really walk this long and winding road?” “Will all the efforts finally pay off?” Those of us who persevered with persistence, patience, and dedication are the ones who have succeeded. I wish that we continue to be patient, persevere and stay on course, even when we do not immediately find success.

For a long time, we have viewed our studies simply as additional knowledge acquisition. But what it really is, the entire dimension of our maturity we gain throughout our studies, we recognize in the end. Many of us had the chance to spend one or two semesters abroad or to make contributions to organizations. All our impressions and experiences had an impact on our interests and intentions. Our appreciation and recognition of our world has changed; it cannot be revoked. While we were students, we became adults, who make decisions and take responsibility.

We became fellows that are expected to take responsibility for society. Many amongst us will become leaders within the next couple of years. We will serve as examples, care for our fellows and answer questions with which they are struggling. When we face problems, we will—guided by our motivation—self-propelled conduct analyses, draft solutions and initiate implementations.

For our future it is my wish that we are always aware of our responsibility and thoughtfully make our decisions. That we constantly strive for adequately meeting our fellows’ needs. And equally important, that we simultaneously identify and address our own needs—we are only helpful when we care for ourselves.

It is my wish that we can grow with our experiences. And that we have numerous opportunities to do so. It is my wish that our experiences contribute to our worlds’ experience.

I wish us courage. That we identify, address and solve the root causes of problems. That we not just fight against effects—similar to our doctors, who heal our diseases and not just ease our pain. Let us be cause-fighters!

It is my wish that we travel. Let us explore the world we share. Let us discover its variety and diversity. Let us discover what separates and connects us with people all over the world. We are about to gather amazing experiences. We will recognize in what fabulous world we live.

The Austrian daily newspaper *Der Standard* published an article on July 20, 2009, on the 40th anniversary of the NASA's Apollo 11 Mission when astronauts first walked on the moon. The article discussed the lives of the astronauts after completing the mission. They received excellent education and trainings to master the journey to the moon, but they were not prepared for their re-entry into their earlier lives. These people are icons for the power of human willpower and the human endeavor for knowledge. What happens when we have achieved inner-will and have gained the knowledge we sought? What happens after we land on the moon?

Our adventures are quite comparable. We graduated from high school—let us remember what a big step this has been for us. We completed our studies. We gained insight. We landed on the moon. We can conclude: our lives did not become easier; each insight brought additional complexity. Every insight we have gained now allows us to choose from a wider range of options, therefore increasing our responsibility. We are no longer asking, “What can I do?” but rather, “What should I do?”

This is a demanding question to ask. I believe this is a question we are supposed to ask permanently in our lives; supposedly every day. If we manage to properly answer this question every day, we will triumph over our lives' challenges. Hence, I wish us perspective. And that we permanently identify a new one.

A close friend, George Iliev, once mentioned in a conversation an amazing quote from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It is excellently suitable to introduce our next wish:

Alice laughed. There's no use trying, she said. One can't believe impossible things. I daresay you haven't had much practice, said the Queen. When I was your age, I always did it half an hour a day. Why, sometimes, I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast. From *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll, 1865.

[In the original address, the German translation was delivered at this point.]

If humans would just believe possible things, we would not have the ability to cross oceans, to fly, to overcome gravity, leave our Earth and land on the moon, or to browse the almost entire human knowledge within just a few seconds. I wish that we have the ability to dream and believe in impossible things.

Let me summarize:

I wish us endurance and patience. I wish us sense of responsibility. I wish us experience and maturity. I wish that we travel. I wish us courage. I wish us perspective. And I wish that we dream.

Treasured fellows,

Enjoy your day. Celebrate accordingly. What you have accomplished, is remarkable, each and every one of you—our parents, grandparents and relatives, our siblings and friends, and of course, you.

Especially, I wish, dear fellows, that we recognize the gift of our education and what for we have been enabled through our studies at Johannes Kepler University. I wish that we recognize our skills and talents. And I wish that we recognize how we can utilize our skills in order to become passionate contributors to our society, like we just promised. Let us be high performers, yet keep our feet planted firmly on the ground.

Throughout my year abroad in the US, I kept a journal and asked all my new friends to write some thoughts and memories into it. On May 1, 2009, one of my professors, Joey Reiman, who I also consider as mentor for my life, wrote the following into my book and I would love to share his words with you now. First, I will read the original English text, followed by the German translation.

Dearest Daniel,

Your journey has begun. Always be dissatisfied with accepted answers. Keep a willingness to break taboos. Retain a capacity to suspend certainties and a delight in playing with possibilities.

And remember Joseph Campbell: “If you follow your bliss you will always have it—money or not. If you follow money you may lose it and you will have nothing.”

And remember me: “Define yourself or be defined.”

Best, Joey Reiman

May 1, 2009

[In the original address, the German translation was delivered at this point.]

Thank you.

Daniel Kaar Linz, March 25, 2010

I would like to thank Kathryn Bouskill and George Iliev for reviewing this translation.