Good morning Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and of course graduates. It gives me great pleasure to stand here today and give the Occasional Address at a ceremony that marks such a momentous occasion for so many of you, and I would like to thank Curtin University for inviting me to do so.

Today is a celebration of the wonderful academic achievements of graduates who set out with a goal to complete their degree with Curtin University.

As a Curtin graduate myself, I know all too well that this wonderful degree that you have worked so hard to earn is not the only achievement you will walk away with. Your experiences and encounters at Curtin have all played a part in shaping who you are today and will help you stand out from the crowd and set you apart.

When you stand out and you are distinguishable from your peers then you will be remembered. As a professional image specialist and career mentor my clients frequently ask me, ‘Natasha what do I have to do to be different – to stand out?’ Their anticipation in hearing my answer is always so intense; they expect me to tell them they must dress in a red suit every day or perhaps they must dye their hair in a shade of blue. They are always pleasantly surprised and sometimes confused when I answer; ‘to stand out and to be memorable you simply have to be you, at your best’.

So what does it mean to be the best that you can be? I believe this is about having the courage, the confidence and the conviction to be the person you were destined to be. Empower yourself with the confidence to shine - openly and unreservedly tell the world who you are and why you are wonderful. When you can truly own who you are, then you will naturally have presence, and that is the key to being memorable. It’s a transition that I see my clients go through and one that can prove to be fruitful.

To achieve this I believe that you must know your strengths and leverage them. Benjamin Franklin once wrote:

“Hide not your talents. They for use were made. What’s a sundial in the shade?”

Understand who you are and align your talents and strengths to your aspirations. When your strengths and abilities are honed and applied at the centre of your life, you will not only find that you achieve your goals, but you will also be more driven and satisfied. This is the key to realizing your potential for success.

What has made me a successful business entrepreneur has been the way in which I market myself and my company as a brand. Consider the use of a personal branding strategy (this is how you market yourself – the image you choose to project) and how it can help you visually convey your strengths, enhance your visibility, communicate all your skills and capabilities and really project you, at your finest.
Let me tell you - confidence is powerful. People will recognise that you are putting your best self forward and you will receive the positive feedback you need to actually build your confidence from the outside in. When you are confident, people will engage with you, they will want to be around you and they will trust you. You will receive that job offer and will be in a position to maximise your opportunities.

As a specialist in the field of image I encourage you to cultivate a professional image for yourself and make it your point of difference. Your image is like a recipe, it does not only refer to the clothes that you choose to wear in the morning but rather a series of ingredients coming together to create a positive outcome that influences.

The five key elements or ingredients you must consider are 1) your ability to communicate effectively and with passion, 2) how you position yourself through an understanding of business and social etiquette, 3) the way you build and maintain your reputation, 4) how you take an active interest in the community and 5) the way you present yourself. Imagine having all of these elements under control and walking into an interview feeling confident and prepared and as a result you are offered the position that you want.

And finally, it is important to be grateful for what you have and share your success and wisdom with others. I recently visited Cambodia in search of a charity for our fundraising project Dine for Life and saw a very different culture: one where basic human rights are being introduced into a society that has lost this awareness through extreme poverty, a lack of education and as a result of civil war.

It was an experience that truly opened my eyes and made me realise how fortunate we are in Australia to be afforded the opportunity for an education and professional career. With this gift I encourage you to do your part in making a contribution to the world and the community in which you live.

As you navigate your way from the world of academia to the world of work you can rest assured that Curtin University has equipped you with the tools and knowledge you need to embark on your career path. Your family and friends will be there, as they are proudly sitting here today, to share their love and support. And the world is always out there full of opportunities waiting for you. Make the most of them.

Congratulations graduates, I wish you all success and happiness and I’m honoured to have spoken to you today. Thank you.