Hello Curtin Graduates! I am truly honored to be here in front of you today - the 2018 graduates of the colleges of Science & Engineering, and Health Sciences, on this special day for all of you.

I have to laugh, as there exists a picture of me, at my graduation at Harvard...
I did not hear a thing, as I had earbuds in my ears attached to a SONY Walkman under my gown. So I consider it a miracle that I am up here speaking at my own commencement, with all of you.

I’m sure all of you feel like you are completing a journey. For many of you, a 4 year journey, that has been almost 20% of your life. I remember at my graduation, feeling a mixture of excitement, and anxiety. You’ve completed a milestone, but now you are taking a first step into ‘the rest of your life’.

Many of our generation will live to 100 years old. If you thought that the last 4 years were interesting, today is a first step - into a journey that will be the ‘other’ 80% of your life. A life that will be full of hope, uncertainty, and excitement. And along the way, lots of trials and tribulations and moments of both fear, and joy.

There are no words that any one person standing in front of you today, can say, that will be a magic bullet for navigating what’s ahead, for the ‘rest of your life’.

But I asked myself, when I was asked to speak here - what would I have liked to have known, if I hadn’t had the earbuds in my ears, and was capable of listening and absorbing ANY advice at your age?

I won’t call it wisdom. I don’t think anyone can actually ‘transmit’ - “wisdom”. Wisdom has to be learned. Wisdom is one of those things - that - it’s AFTER you make a mistake, and then read the ‘words of wisdom’ - that it all makes sense. Before that, it somehow just does not exist. So I’m going not going to call it ‘wisdom’ but instead, “life lessons learned”.

● and therein lies the key word, ‘learn’

If there was ONE thing that has been important in my life, and hopefully, instilled in you in your years here..

It’s that life, is a constant lesson; and that if you have ONE SINGLE SKILL in life that you have to maintain, it is the ability to learn. Learning to learn... and learning.

Learning makes you smart. It makes you flexible. It makes you able to roll with the changes. And there will be MANY changes ahead in your lives, that you will all have to navigate. The year I graduated, computers as we know them today did not exist.

Apple and Intel were still considered startups. TV’s still had vacuum tubes in them. Change happens, and it happens faster and faster every year. When I graduated, cell phones did not exist. Today I can literally stand here and snap a 360 degree immersive photo and instantly share it for the whole world to see, what see, from right here on stage. Smile everyone!

The change that will occur in your lifetime is going to be awesome, daunting and amazing, all at the same time. It will be YOUR ability to adapt to that change that will determine what you end up doing, how happy you will be, and whether or not you feel relevant - or dispossessed. So stay on it. Keep learning.
My journey, is probably a lot like yours. I started life dealing with expectations. Structures. Fitting in. Everything about growing up in this past era has been about trying to map yourself into someone else’s system. Grade school, middle school, high school, college... For me, it always felt too contained. Too governed. For me, during my school years, I just could not wait to get out - and you are about to do that.

You are about to foist yourself into a world that is going to feel very unstructured; and increasingly so. So how do you handle that? How do you navigate that.. a world of infinite choices, without something clearly attached at the end?

We are at the forefront of a total change in the way society is structured. We all know the term ‘Industrial Revolution’, the one that dominated the structures of our parents and grandparents generations, and we also probably have heard the term ‘4th Industrial Revolution’ - which is the one governing ours.

What does that mean for you? Software is reconstructing the way all of us integrate with society. We are all becoming a world of individual molecules; free radicals; individually productive economic units on a fabric, that can attach, detach, and reattach to communities of interest at any time - and that collectively - can accomplish great things, when stitched together from wherever you are, by technology.

The past few generations have been dominated by the physical industrial revolution. Power was concentrated into giant monolithic companies and governments with top down control. We’re moving into a world where it’s more like a gigantic borderless chemistry experiment, with us as the molecules. How appropriate is that, as I stand in front of the Colleges of Science & Engineering, and Health Sciences..

We are all about to get thrown into a boiling mix of change, where the entry is a mix of randomness, chaos, and opportunity. All of you are entering a world where we are constantly part of a dynamic set of flexible communities, where power and productivity are distributed. Flexible and voluntary communities of interest can assemble, disassemble, and reassemble in volume and with great speed in a constantly changing flexible fabric.

So how do you guide yourself? How will you make your choices? It all sounds very uncomfortable, doesn’t it?

But do not worry. Cherish that feeling. Hold on to it. Be uncomfortable. Learn to learn, to make your way through it.

Progress only happens when you are uncomfortable. Put yourself in that place, over and over. It will mean that you are learning. People like Albert Einstein, Richard Branson, the late Steve Jobs - none of them ‘just fit’ into a static, rules based environment.

Their entire lives were at the edge - at the edge of learning - and they were constantly learning. None of them felt like they were just ‘fitting in’. Put yourself out there - keep yourself out there - at the edge of your comfort zone. And learn.

I have spent the better part of my life as an investor in technology companies; in fields with rapid change, where waves come and go with great speed. Where companies, and projects, are born, grow and die at an incredible pace. THAT is becoming ‘normal’. So how do you know when and where to spend your time? How do you know which wave to ride? Which wave will be the ‘lucky’ one when you go out to surf?
I often quote an American actor named Woody Allen who says “80% of life is just showing up.”

and I always add… "but it’s about showing up at the right place at the right time”.

There’s another quote that I often hear “I’d rather be lucky than smart”.

and I’d add “but being smart, is putting yourself in the path of luck.”

Be aware. You are NOT going to be able to predict what’s ahead, you can only surf the waves by being aware. Look behind you for what’s happened, but don’t assume it will tell you what’s ahead. Look to your left, look to your right - be aware of all the data - of all the things happening around you. Be out there - and when you make your choices - absorb all that data, and make sure that you FEEL it. Listen to your brain and all it’s chaotic thoughts, but listen, REALLY listen to your heart and FEEL where it wants to take you.

And don’t be afraid - you will fail sometimes, actually, you will fail often… be OK with that, and learn in the process. In today’s increasingly dynamic world, there will always be another chance on another wave. You just have to try. And keep learning.

I’ll leave you with one final thought. Life ends up being what you believe in. How you conduct yourself, the circles you end up in, and how life treats you, will be a function of your values. It’s literally taken me a lifetime to sort out mine. They may not be for everyone, but they have worked, for me. No wisdom, just values that serve as guiding principles for my decisions.

● to always stand for something greater than yourself
● to leave every person or place you touch, better off than before you touched it
● to use the powers the universe has granted you, to empower others

I believe, that if all of us could live by these values, in the end, the world will be a better place.

Thank you for your time today, and I hope somehow I will have helped a few of you that did not have earbuds in your ears, as you take your first step toward the ‘other’ 80% of your life.