UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

Diskors tal-Ftuħ tar-Rettur

OĦLOM ĦOLMA SIEWJA … STENBAĦ! … ĦABREK BIEX TWETTAQHA
DREAM A USEFUL DREAM ... WAKE UP! … STRIVE TO ACHIEVE IT

Kanċillier, Membri tal-Kunsill, membri tal-korp akkademiku, ħaddiema tal-Università, għeżież studenti – l-għodwa t-tajba.

Ta' spiss jien norqod ħafif hafna għax moħħi jibqa' jtanbar u jhewden... normalment nistenbaħ kmieni ħafna... mhux l-ewwel darba nispiċċa nibgħat l-emails f'nofs ta' lejl bl-imbierek iPad, li fit-tajjeb u fil-ħażin jistrieħ fuq il-komodina ta' ħdejn rasi.

Iżda xi kultant, meta ma nistenbaħx fil-ħin, partikularment wara xi xarba nbid tajba, tqajjimni ż-żarżira inċiżiva tal-iżveljarin. Dlonk jintemm b'ħasda l-ħolm "sublimi" tiegħi – għax daqslikieku kienet xi barmil ilma kiesaħ, l-għajta penetranti tal-iżveljarin tniżżilni ħesrem mill-isħab u tankrali saqajja fil-papoċċ ta' biswit is-sodda. Jiskula d-demm lejn saqajja, inpeċpeċ għajnejja biex niffoka, u hemm tibda ġurnata xogħol oħra... Bonġu Università ta' Malta!

Allura, l-ħolm li noħolmu għandu jiżvinta hekk – ħesrem – daqslikieku dak li noħolmu u dak li hu huma żewġ ħwejjeġ distinti? Il-ħolm tagħna għandu jkun tabilfors maqtugħ mir-realtà li ngħixu, jew dan jista' jkun parti essenzjali mill-kreazzjoni tar-realtà li għad ngħixu għada? Hu veru dak li jgħid il-qawl Malti li l-kieku u li kien qatt m'għexu flimkien? Hu veru, jekk inħarsu lura, iżda mhux jekk inħarsu l-quddiem!

Illum, għas-seba' darba, reġa' mess lili bħala r-Rettur biex nagħmel id-diskors tal-ftuħ ta' sena akkademika ġdida. Jisimni Juanito Camilleri, u bħala r-Rettur jien responsabbli mit-tmexxija ta' kuljum tal-Università, mill-aspett kemm akkademiku kif ukoll amministrattiv.

Qabelxejn, għan-nom tal-istess korp akkademiku u amministrattiv ta' din l-Università, bi pjaċir nilqa' lill-istudenti l-ġodda tagħna għax xi darba dawn ħolmu ħolma siewja... ħolmu li għad ikunu hawn magħna llum... iżda għall-grazzja ta' Alla din il-ħolma ma nħasditx ħesrem minn xi żveljarin aħrax... il-ħolma tagħkom seħħet illum... seħħet għax iffukajtu, seħħet għax stinkajtu, għax għamiltu l-almu tagħkom biex issarrfuha f'realtà.

Iva, il-ħolm siewi jista' jsir realtà – iżda biex dan iseħħ wieħed irid jistenbaħ u b'saqajh mal-art... [idealment ilbsu l-papoċċ]... wieħed irid jistinka u jaħdem. Fid-dinja ta' llum xejn ma jiġi b'xejn. Is-suċċess huwa rifless ta' viżjoni f'waqtha, ta' ħila... xi daqsxejn ta' xorti tajba tgħin... iżda wisq aktar il-ħidma u l-impenn.

Għeżież studenti, bħala l-gradwati prospettivi ta' din l-Alma Mater, bħala l-mexxejja futuri ta' pajjiżna, bħala s-sisien tal-ekonomija u tas-soċjetà ta' għada, aħna nistidnukom toħolmu f'dinja aħjar, toħolmu f'teknoloġiji ġodda, toħolmu f'soċjetà aktar imħarrġa u miftuħa, toħolmu f'ekonomija dinamika u minsuġa tajjeb fis-swieq globali, toħolmu f'ambjent sostenibbli, toħolmu f'valuri mill-aqwa ... iżda mhux biss...

Il-ħolm hu kruċjali... min ma joħlomx m'għandux postu f'università... iżda qegħdin hawn ukoll biex titħarrġu fid-dixxiplini varji tagħkom u biex titrawmu fl-għerf ta' kif dak il-ħolm jista' jitwettaq, biex il-viżjoni ssir azzjoni, biex ix-xogħol u l-impenn tagħkom jibnu l-Malta sovrana ta' għada, u jirfina l-identità unika tagħna l-Maltin fil-futur.

Jekk Malta titqies bħala dinamika u bieżla, kreattiva u innovattiva, dan ser jiddependi minnkom; jekk Malta titqies għaqlija u ħanina, magħquda u miftuħa, dan ser jiddependi minnkom; jekk Malta titqies ekonomikament soda u soċjalment stabbli, dan ukoll ser jiddependi minnkom. F'din l-ewwel ġurnata tal-ħajja universitarja tagħkom hu ferm importanti li tieħdu dan l-impenn bis-serjetà.

Dan il-pajjiż qiegħed jinvesti ħafna flus fl-edukazzjoni tagħkom, u għar-raġunijiet li għadni kif semmejt, fl-opinjoni tiegħi qiegħed jagħmel sewwa. Biex il-kwalità ta' din l-Università dejjem titjieb u l-firxa u l-fond tal-programmi ta' studju u ta' riċerka jkunu sostnuti, hemm bżonn ħafna flus, iva hemm bżonn investiment akbar.

Dan jitfa' fuqna lkoll responsabbiltà kbira. Irridu naraw li kull ewro li jintefaq fl-Università jintefaq bil-għaqal, irridu naraw li l-investiment li jsir jissarraf – b'mod dirett kif ukoll indirett – f'livell ta' għajxien aħjar għall-Maltin kollha.

Ħarsu ħarsa lejn dak li qiegħed jiġri madwarna fid-dinja – lejn it-taqlib ekonomiku li qiegħed iqanqal l-inkwiet soċjali u t-terrur. Dak li qiegħed jiġri għandu jservi ta' żveljarin għal dawk li forsi għadhom ma stenbħux. Il-ġlieda biex insostnu u ntejbu l-livell tal-għajxien f'dan il-pajjiż hi kontinwa u b'ebda mod m'għandna nimmaġinaw li l-maltemp tas-swieq finanzjarji għadda, jew li Malta, u aħna l-Maltin, għax aħna speċjali, għandna xi immunità b'xi dritt mill-forzi ħarxa ekonomiċi.

Iżda jekk dan il-poplu jibqa' magħqud u ffukat fuq dak li hu verament importanti, jekk dan il-poplu jibqa' jinvesti fit-taħriġ u fl-għerf, jekk dan il-poplu jkompli jifhem l-importanza li jinvesti aktar – iva ħafna aktar – fir-riċerka u fl-innovazzjoni, mela naf li hawn ħafna bħali f'din l-Università li jrabbu kuraġġ kbir. Naf li l-maġġoranza tal-korp akkademiku hu impenjat bis-sħiħ biex jara li Malta tkompli tiġi fornuta bil-kapital uman imħarreġ mhux biss biex jokkupa l-postijiet tax-xogħol ta' llum, iżda biex bir-riċerka u bl-innovazzjoni jinħoloq xogħol produttiv u kreattiv ġdid – xogħol f'oqsma li għadhom qegħdin jiġu skoperti.

Għalhekk, meta nappella lill-Gvern, lill-imsieħba soċjali, lill-industrija, u lill-Maltin kollha biex jinvestu ħafna aktar fl-Università ta' Malta, nagħmel dan b'sens ta' responsabbiltà. Nagħmel dan għax għalkemm qegħdin ngħixu fi sfond ta' kriżi ekonomika globali, nemmen li l-aħjar mod li din nilqgħulha, hu b'edukazzjoni terzjarja eċċellenti, bir-riċerka, u bl-innovazzjoni.

Nemmen verament dak li għedt xi snin ilu li din l-*Alma Mater* hi l-omm li għamlitna lilna l-Maltin dak li aħna, u li fikom u bl-edukazzjoni terzjarja tagħkom, bil-muża innovattiva tagħkom imsejsa fuq ir-riċerka serja, għad twelled dak li għad iseħħ minna.

Kunu studenti responsabbli u attivi. Nawgura li hawn issibu lilkom infuskom, issibu l-milja tagħkom, issibu l-qofol tal-futur ta' pajjiżna.

Xi sentejn ilu, fid-diskors tal-ftuħ tas-sena akkademika, ħarist lejn x'inhu dak li jagħmel istituzzjoni bħal din denja tat-titlu *Università*. Semmejt li qegħdin naraw l-aħjar Universitajiet fid-dinja jagħmlu t-transizzjoni għal dak li huwa msejjaħ "3rd Generation University" – Università tat-Tielet Ġenerazzjoni. Semmejt ukoll l-importanza li waqt li l-Università ta' Malta tkompli trawwem it-talent, tkattar l-għerf, u tinseġ l-identità Maltija, trid tagħmel dan bħala Università internazzjonali f'dinja globalizzata.

Ippermettuli nfakkarkom li Università tat-Tielet Ġenerazzjoni hi waħda mibnija fuq tliet pilastri prinċipali: it-tagħlim, ir-riċerka, u l-parteċipazzjoni attiva fl-iżvilupp ġust u sostenibbli tas-soċjetà u tal-ekonomija globali.

Kif semmejt qabel, fil-każ tal-Università ta' Malta, l-għan tagħna jrid ikun li ngħinu, l-ewwel u qabel kollox, l-iżvilupp tal-identità, tas-soċjetà u tal-ekonomija Maltija – iżda dan mhux f'sens insulari u magħluq – imma f'kuntest ta' pajjiż sovran fl-Unjoni Ewropea, li jipproġetta preżenza importanti fil-Mediterran, u li kapaċi jikkontribwixxi anki fl-isfera globali.

Irrid nerġa' nenfasizza li l-kontribut li għandha tagħti università bħal tagħna m'għandux jitqies biss fuq bażi tan-numru ta' studenti, jew tan-numru u tal-firxa ta' korsijiet ġodda. Dan importanti, iżda mhux biżżejjed.

Il-kontribut li qiegħda tagħti din l-Università m'għandhux jitqies biss bin-numru ta' proġetti internazzjonali ta' riċerka li nipparteċipaw fihom, jew bl-ammont ta' flus li jirnexxilna nġibu għal proġetti jew infrastruttura tar-riċerka. Iva, dan ukoll importanti ħafna, iżda dan ukoll mhux biżżejjed.

Fl-aħħar mill-aħħar din l-Università għad tiġi meqjusa fuq bażi ta' kemm jirnexxilha tkompli tinfluwenza t-tmexxija ta' dan il-pajjiż fl-isferi soċjali u ekonomiċi kollha biex, bħala membru fl-Unjoni Ewropea, Malta tibqa' sostenibbli u sovrana, kapaċi tikkontribwixxi b'wiċċha minn quddiem fi sfera internazzjonali, kapaċi tilqa' l-isfidi ta' għada.

U fuq din in-nota nixtieq ngħid kelmtejn bl-Ingliż għax huwa importanti li niftakru li għandna studenti barranin fostna, li llum nistidinkom tilqgħuhom magħna bil-qalb kollha. Grazzi.

Dear international freshers, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the University of Malta and I thank you for patiently listening to the initial part of my speech which I delivered in Maltese in accordance with established tradition.

This said, I cannot let this occasion pass without addressing you in particular, and I congratulate and thank you for choosing this University for your studies. Today, you join a long line of students spanning nearly 420 years as you embark on a journey of discovery, a journey in a foreign country, which despite its size, has managed to gain its sovereignty, and today projects its distinct Mediterranean identity within the European milieu.

I understand the challenge you face and the excitement of leaving your homeland to pursue studies abroad. Settling down in a foreign country whilst delving into one's study or research programme is a challenge, but, I assure you that you will soon cherish your stay with us.

I believe that the experience you bring with you from your respective backgrounds and respective countries enriches the cultural and intellectual milieu on campus. Indeed this University cannot aspire to achieve its goals without the international dimension you bring, and I hope that through your example, more and more Maltese students will choose to spend time studying or on exchange in other universities abroad.

Please do not hesitate to seek the assistance of the International Students Office should the need arise, and please note that Professor Mary-Anne Lauri, the Pro-Rector in charge of Student and Institutional Affairs, and Dr. Marilyn Clark, my delegate in charge of International Student Wellbeing, are available to assist you.

As you can see, judging by the growing number of cranes and workmen on campus, the University is investing significantly in upgrading its facilities and in scaling up its capacity. I am delighted that the new state-of-the-art facilities at our IT Services Centre are being put to excellent use. Please indulge us with your patience while the installation of new air-conditioning and energy-saving lighting systems are installed in the library.

The construction of an extension of the Faculty of Economics Management and Accountancy and the Faculties of Laws and Theology respectively are nearing completion creating much needed space for staff and students of these faculties.

Just as one thought the construction noise and dust were finally going to disappear from that area, the construction of the extension of the Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences, and facilities to host the Institute of Tourism Travel and Culture and the Department of Criminology have commenced. Once again, I apologise for the inconvenience this will cause, but, alas such is the price of expansion on a live-campus.

As you walk around the ring road you will also see the spanking new Faculty of ICT building nearing completion, and if works continue as scheduled, I hope that this facility will become operational in time for the second semester. I can assure you that there are several of us who will be relieved to see this project complete – paperwork and all!

The construction of two new floors on the Biomedical Sciences building is also taking shape. These are intended to consolidate and expand our wet-laboratory facilities and to create the right environment to enhance our research programmes in genetics, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical sciences, to complement the development of the Life Sciences Park close to our campus.

In the meantime, thanks to the new state-of-the-art equipment installed in a broad spectrum of disciplines ranging from materials and physical sciences, the life sciences, engineering, and ICT we have launched research projects which hitherto have been inaccessible to us. The enhanced and upgraded facilities which were funded through European Regional Development Funds and Government investment are also proving instrumental for the University to create strong research collaboration with industry.

This year, the University of Malta launched its fourteenth faculty, namely, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing. This is the fourth new faculty set up during my tenure as rector, following the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences respectively. The creation of these faculties was a natural transition and consolidation of the work embarked upon by my predecessors and in my opinion

has placed the disciplines therein in robust administrative structures which lend themselves to effective synergy.

Moreover, the University has just launched the School of Performing Arts bringing together Music Studies, Dance Studies and Theatre Studies under one management structure which is focused on developing the performing arts manifest in the respective genres as well as holistically.

Needless to say, the established faculties have all experienced their share of growth, development and excitement on all fronts. I feel I must take this opportunity to thank all our Deans for their dedication and leadership.

On another front, the Mediterranean Institute has been recast and is now a research-focused institute taking a broad perspective of the Mediterranean, its people, history, environment and politics, amongst others. Moreover, the European Documentation and Research Centre has been recast as the Institute for European Studies and continues to broaden and deepen its perspective on the discipline. Here again, I wish to acknowledge the excellent work of the Chairpersons and Directors of the University's numerous Institutes and Centres and all those who serve on the respective Boards.

A few months back, I was delighted when Senate and Council supported my decision to appoint a Pro-rector for Gozo. Through this, the University has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen its role in the development of Malta's sister island. The University of Malta is committed to continue to extend its academic services and programmes to Gozo and in particular to help provide through its teaching, research and community outreach a solid foundation to the development of the Eco-Gozo concept.

To further strengthen the community outreach of the University in a bid to stimulate a larger enrolment of students from the inner harbour area, a Cottonera Resource Centre has been set up within Santa Margerita College. It is important that we all do our utmost to ensure that, irrespective of where they come from and irrespective of their social milieu, all those living in Malta view this University as their legacy. I am grateful to the Minister of Education who enthusiastically acceded to our request to utilise the premises of the College for this purpose.

There is much more to say about the excellent value this University creates. I am confident that if a ranking were to exist measured on the basis of the value created for the money invested, then our University would certainly feature amongst the very best in the world. So anybody, who, like us, yearns for a better University, as this country surely deserves, is kindly advised to contribute to the growth of the University… but talk is cheap… so please make a donation, no matter how small or large, to the University of Malta Research, Innovation and Development Trust Fund which was set up a few years ago. Contributions can be made online via www.ridt.org.mt

At this point, I would like to thank my Pro-Rectors who I am pleased to introduce in alphabetical order:

- Prof. Joe Friggieri is the Pro-rector for Gozo;
- Prof. Mary-Anne Lauri, as mentioned earlier, is the Pro-rector for Students and Institutional Affairs;
- Prof. Richard Muscat is the Pro-rector for Research and Innovation; and
- Prof. Alfred Vella is the Pro-rector for Academic Affairs.

I thank them for their unstinting support and for sharing my dreams, joys and frustrations… but most importantly for getting on with it, most times against the odds. I am truly proud and blessed to work with them.

The University dreams on… but we have also shown that we have the stuff to turn useful dreams into reality. I know I am risking overstretching my welcome this morning but allow me to share a few more of our dreams…

The University will continue to refurbish and transform the Valletta Campus into an International Graduate School. The four International Masters Programmes we have launched to date in collaboration with prestigious North American universities are going from strength to strength and have paved the way for several others which are in the pipeline. Our Valletta Campus has also seen a tremendous growth in the number of International Summer and Winter Schools, conferences, workshops and ad hoc seminars. We will continue working to secure the necessary funds to restore the Valletta Campus as this University's original and most prestigious venue of scholarship in the Mediterranean.

The new faculties that have been set up necessitate the construction of new facilities. I am pleased to announce that the University has already submitted to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority plans for the construction of buildings at its Msida Campus to house the Faculty for the Built Environment, the Faculty of Education, the Institute for Earth Systems, the Institute of Sustainable Energy, and a School of Visual Arts and Design.

Moreover, designs are being finalised for new facilities to be built at the heart of the Msida campus to host a multidisciplinary Postdoctoral Research Centre, and the performance laboratories for the School of Performing Arts and production suites for Digital Games production.

The displacement space created by the relocation of the Faculty of Education will create the space required to allow the Faculty of Arts to scale up and gain the physical space necessary to extend its postgraduate programmes. Moreover, the area vacated by the Faculty for Built Environment will be refurbished to host the Faculty for Social Wellbeing.

Finally, given the requirement for more clinical space at Mater Dei Hospital the need for the construction of a new Medical School to house our Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, and Faculty of Dentistry is evident.

The University is working to present these projects amongst others for European Regional Development Funds which we hope Malta will secure for the period 2013-2020. In the meantime, I beg your patience as construction is underway, and as we make do with temporary accommodation and facilities until these projects unfold.

Another project which is envisaged is the construction of a University Residence and Community Centre close to this campus. We believe that this project will create a resident community on campus. A University such as ours should have modern-day facilities accessible on a 24x7 basis and thus should never sleep.

More important, we must cut the rhetoric and invest decisively to realise these visions as a University such as ours should never need a wakeup call!

Dear freshers, today you have joined a vibrant academic community which looks at the future with optimism and looks back on its past with pride.

I look forward to reach an agreement with Government on a way to create a solid underpinning for the sustainable financing of the University. The time is right for the University and Government to come up with a framework agreement which, whilst safeguarding the University's autonomy, sets the broad goals to be achieved and identifies the financing mechanisms to achieve them.

It would be a pity to wake up suddenly to the shrill sound of an alarm in ten years' time that declares then that Malta deserves a better University! By then it will be too late!

We have a clear vision of what needs to be done now… we have identified prospective projects which require a capital investment of circa €240 million over the next decade… new ways of financing the University need to be implemented which are reflective of cost-base, activity and outputs… and which are conducive to long-term planning!

Although our vision is the stuff dreams are made of… ours are not pipedreams… with the support and goodwill of all stakeholders, we will continue to strive to realise our dreams in Malta's best interest. Recession or otherwise, the investment plan required now to secure the survival of this University into the future should not daunt us. It is imperative that the rhythm of investment and rate of growth secured in the past six years continues throughout the next six years and beyond. This is our 2020 vision – this is Malta's future!

There is so much more I can say and announce, but, I have pushed your patience enough. So without further ado, I welcome you all – academics, support staff, and local and international students - to a productive and fruitful year. Let us carry our legacy with pride!

01.10.2012