



L-UNIVERSITA' TA' MALTA

Diskors tal-Ftuh tar-Rettur

Ministru, Kancillier, President u Membri tal-Kunsill, membri tal-korp akademiku, haddiema ta' l-Universita`, gheziez studenti.

Huwa ta' pjacir kbir ghalija li nindirizzakom illum f'din ɭokkazjoni ta' fuh ta' sena akademika gdida.

Illum madwar elfejn student gdid jinghaqdu maghna f'din il-familja, biex jitharrgu, jiftha l-orizzonti taghhom, u biex jaghmlu pass importanti iehor fil-karriera taghhom.

Lil dawn l-istudenti nawguralhom kull success.

Kunu kburin li llum intom ser tibdew tibbenefikaw minn wirt u tradizzjoni ta' erba' mitt sena, ghalkemm dejjem hemm x'tirranga, u ghalkemm ir-rizorsi mhux dejjem ilahhqu mad-domanda, li Alla jbieren dejjem qieghda tikber fl-isfond ta' socjeta' u ekonomija dinamici, nassigurakom li din l-Universita` tiprovdilkom l-opportunitajiet kollha biex issibu l-milja taghkom, biex tikbru fil-personalita` u fil-karattru, u biex tkabbru l-gherf. Pero` f'Universita` l-Edukazzjoni ma' tinghatax bl-imgharfa - dan hu spazju ta' tahrig, ta' taghlim, ta' ricerka, ta' studju personali - l-ewwel u qabel kollox l-Universita` ser tghinek tiskopri min hu l-veru int, forsi b'mod li qabel qatt m'gharaft.

Ser tiltaqa' mał-limitazzjonijiet tieghek, ser ticcelebra t-talenti tieghek u bla dubju ser idduq il-hlewwa tas-success, ser tiffaccja sfidi fejn trid taqta' bi snienek, izda nawguralkom ilkoll li tittantakom il-muza ta' l-gherf u ssibu l-imhabba lejn il-qari. Ftakru li Degree m'ghandhiex tkun sfida ta' studju pappagallesk izda ghanda tkun mixja ta' qari, skoperti, u kreattività.

Illum, hekk kif niftha pagna gdida ta' ɭistorja tagħna, hu tajjeb li nfakkru x'għandha tħisser esperjenza Universitarja.

Iva, l-istudent qiegħed hawn biex isegwi programm ta' studju, biex jistudja l-materjal imhejji u biex jagħmel ix-xogħol preskritt fil-programm ta' għażla tieghu. Hu importanti li din id-dimensjoni formali tal-hajja Universitarja tittieħed bl-akbar serjeta`.

Izda student Universitarju m'għandu qatt jispicca bhal magna tal-hart f'għalqa ta' "credits", jahdem b'mod mekkanistiku fl-ispazju dejjaq ta' bejn il-klassi u l-laboratorju, bejn xi "assignment" u xi ezami.

Hi hasra li ghan xi whud l-Universita` tispicca sempliciment bhal “lecture centre” – il-post li fih nattendu l-klassijiet biex immedjatament wara ndabbru rasna lejn id-dar.

Dan iwassalni għat-tema li jien ghanzil għal din is-sena: *Edukazzjoni aktar shiha... lil hinn mic-Certifikati*.

Tehdunix hazin. L-istudju formali hu importanti, izda daqstant ie-hor hu importanti li student jippartecipa fil-hajja socjali u ta' volontarjat ta' l-Universita`, u li wieħed jieħu vizjoni wiesħha lejn it-tahrig u l-formazzjoni tieghu.

Per ezempju, għaliex għandu wieħed jabbanduna l-prattika tal-lingwi, tal-muzika, tat-teatru sempliciment ghaxx ghazel kors ta' l-Ingerira jew tax-Xjenza? Fl-istess hin għaliex m'ghandux student ta' l-arti jew ix-xjenzi socjali jwessa' l-uzu tieghu tat-teknoloġija ta' l-informazzjoni? u għaliex m'għandhomx studenti jitgħallu kif jipprezentaw xi l-ksieb jew xogħol tagħhom, jirfinaw il-mod u l-istil tal-kitba tagħhom, itejbu l-hiliet ta' komunikazzjoni tagħhom, u għax le, jitgħallu kif jiktbu *business plan* anke jekk dawn mhumiex studenti tal-Management jew ta' l-Accounts?

Fil-qasir, x'qiegħed nħid? Qiegħed nħid li lil hinn mit-tahrig preskritt kull student għandu jieħu kull opportunita` biex jiftah l-orizzonti tieghu, biex itejeb il-hiliet tieghu, partikolarmen dawk li jaġħmlu aktar konxju mid-dinja ta' madwaru u aktar imħarreg kemm bhala cittadin f'dinja dejjem miftuha, kif ukoll bhala haddiem prospettiv f'suq globali.

Fuq nota simili, nixtieq nara aktar u aktar studenti jibbenfikaw mill-opportunitajiet ta' skambju ma' Universitajiet oħra.

Fid-dinja ta' llum tista' verament tghid li għandek formazzjoni Universitarja shiha jekk qatt ma tlaqt xtutna biex tesperjenza l-hajja f'pajjizi ohra, jew biex idduq kulturi, twemmin u hsibijiet ohra?

Nassigurakom li bis-safar wieħed jista' verament jifhem il-valur ta' dak kollu li hu tajjeb f'pajjizna, u b'mod oggettiv, dak kollu li nistgħu nagħmlu ahjar.

Irridu lkoll napprezzaw l-importanza li nifhmu aktar din l-Unjoni Ewropea li tagħha nagħmlu parti, irridu nkomplu nippartecipaw bis-shih f'dan l-ispazju edukattiv, socjali, ekonomiku, u kulturali li qiegħed jevolvi ta' kuljum.

U fuq din in-nota nixtieq nħid kelmtejn bl-Ingliz ghax huwa importanti li niftakru li għandna studenti barranin fostna, li llum, bil-qalb kollha, qegħdin nilqghu-hom magħna. Bil-prezenza tagħhom dawn jifthulna lkoll tieqa fuq pajjizhom, hekk kif intom tistgħu testendu l-vizibilita' tal-karatru Malti f'pajjizi ohra meta ssiefru. Grazzi.

28 ta' Settembru 2007

Rector's Opening Speech

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

I understand the challenge you face and the excitement of leaving your homeland to pursue studies abroad, as I myself experienced this when I left home at a young age to start my University career in England. Coming to terms with a new country and a new culture whilst delving into one's study or research programme is a challenge, but, I assure you that, once you settle in, you will cherish every moment.

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

I hope that we will make you feel welcomed and cherished as I believe that the experience you bring with you from your respective backgrounds and respective countries enriches the cultural and intellectual milieu on campus.

The University of Malta is a modern university with ancient roots; indeed this University traces its origins to the founding of the Collegium Melitense in 1592.

I have chosen this year's theme "Well-rounded Education.. beyond Certification" because I strongly believe that the University experience – and indeed the process of life-long learning as a whole - should extend beyond formal curricular and examination structures.

I feel that a University experience should be a period of discovery and acquisition of skills beyond the prescribed confines of a specific degree programme.

It is for this reason that Senate has approved the launching of a new pilot initiative branded *Degreeplus* which is intended to give Freshers the opportunity to continue learning languages, appreciate Malta's cultural heritage, acquire ICT skills, enhance their communication and presentation skills, gain a better insight on the world of enterprise and entrepreneurship and participate in voluntary work and student societies... and all this in a semi-formal or informal setting.

The idea here is not to create more work against credits! In fact no formal credits will be assigned to activities done under this initiative... and indeed nobody will be forced to enrol or participate.

The idea is to encourage students to socialise and grow beyond the curriculum of their degree programme... and acquire informal skills that will undoubtedly enhance their career and employability.

Students' effort and achievement under this scheme will be given due recognition in their transcript.

In order to accommodate this initiative and in a bid to enhance the social activity on campus, the timetable for first year undergraduates has been left clear for a couple of hours on a Wednesday afternoon.

I must emphasise this scheme is a pilot scheme this year and that initially it will be open to a limited number of Freshers on a first-come first-served basis. So don't wait too long to sign up if you are interested.

This year we hope to learn from your feedback and we plan to extend the scheme next year as I am confident that through this scheme students from different faculties will find a great opportunity to socialise whilst acquiring or brushing up their skill set.

Another initiative I intend to commence this academic year is the formulation of a plan to transform parts of our library into an information commons with spaces that are conducive of informal individual and group learning, blending books with digital media in an environment which encourages more and more of our students to remain on campus to socialise whilst learning in and across disciplines.

Our aim should be to create the systems to allow us to keep our library open for longer hours and eventually on a 24x7 basis. Our library should never sleep, and moreover, our library should be well-stocked with classical books and digital resources.

Our library, our information commons, must become more so than it is now, the heart and soul of the University. It must become an inextricable part of a culture of learning and discovery, it must become the social meeting place on campus!

This may sound ambitious and will not be achieved overnight, but I believe that this University deserves nothing less - this country deserves nothing less!

Allow me to briefly highlight a few achievements of the past year:

This year we welcome the Faculty of ICT into the family of faculties – I augur that the Dean and the Heads of Department of this Faculty in tandem with their counterparts in Science and Engineering take this opportunity to work together to extend and upgrade the curriculum of the various degree programmes in line with emerging needs in industry.

In the past months, the University has been in a position to recruit a number of academic posts in various fields ranging from Fine Arts, Languages, Tourism Studies, Translation and Interpretation, International Relations, Healthcare, Engineering, ICT, and Science amongst others. We hope to be in a position to strengthen our academic departments further in the coming year.

The University has also started the process of restructuring its administration, in particular its Finance department and HR department which will undoubtedly benefit from the software tools being procured.

We have also started to restructure and consolidate the University's commercial arm and we hope that this will grow to generate alternative funding to support world-class research and scholarship.

Finally, it is worth noting that the University has applied for funding under the EU's Regional Development Fund to the tune of circa Euro 30 million which will hopefully see the construction of:

A state-of-the-art Computer Services Centre;
The construction of an extension of the Junior College;
The construction of the Faculty of ICT building; and
The purchase of equipment for state-of-the-art laboratories.

There are several other initiatives that are underway or on the drawing board, but I think that you have suffered me enough for one morning.

Without further ado, I would like to sincerely welcome you all – academics, support staff, and students - to a productive and fruitful year. Let's make this year another excellent one, let's carry our legacy with pride.

Thank you very much for your attention.

28th September 2007