

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to be here today. I am delighted, humbled, and honoured to receive this award of “Alumnae of the year”.

I am proud that I spent four years here at Essex studying Genetics at such a reputable University whilst living here in Colchester - a wonderfully diverse and vibrant town.

Growing up, I always had a keen interest for Science and Healthcare. Having been diagnosed with a non-curable orthopaedic condition in my early teenage years, I delved deeper into the condition and realised there was a potential genetic link. This really was where my passion for Genetics began, and I’m grateful that I ended up here in Essex to further my knowledge in the subject.

My time at Essex were some of the best years of my life. I learnt so much about, and from others. Studying about the intricacies of the human body on both a micro and macro scale, and the vital role of how technology can have a positive impact on human health, propelled my interest in the area.

When I first joined Essex I had no idea what I wanted to do with my career. The one thing I did know was that I wanted to do something meaningful and with purpose, to ultimately improve the lives of others. I used my time at Essex as a true learning experience and took the advice of my mother to switch from a 3-year to a 4-year course with a placement to allow me the opportunity to explore my career interests further.

Outside of lectures, I acquired a strong desire to learn more about venture creation so attended all business-related events and activities which were on offer to me at the time. It was only when myself and a few computer science students came together, to win a healthcare venture competition on campus, was when I realised the true potential of combining healthcare and technology.

Some of the most important life lessons I have learnt and something I will always be grateful for was the ability at Essex to have had my views constantly challenged, to engage in dialogue, to throw myself into debates, and to hear viewpoints of others. I now see that through the encouragement of diverse dialogue and robust debate, that new boundaries are broken and new heights in human thinking are achieved.

As a result of the highly driven culture, cultivated at- The University of Essex, it gave me the best gift of all – it helped me discover who I am, what my passions are, and what I stand for.

Gynaecological health is of great importance to me - as a woman. Both personally and around me I see, hear and experience so many women suffering in silence and going through constant dismissal of their medical experiences. These experiences are often exacerbated in ethnic minorities and those of low income. There is a distinct lack of research in many chronic

gynaecological and reproductive conditions leading to a lack of understanding from a medical perspective on how to best diagnose, treat and manage many of these conditions.

These observations of the world in which we live and the stories of those around me going through their gynaecological journeys helped me realise my true calling.

In 2019, I launched Syrona Health – A digital healthcare platform created to improve access to care for those going through a variety of gynaecological health conditions.

In the early days, my co-founder and I had very little resources, but we had an idea, determination and passion – something money can't buy. I decided to leave my career in the city as a pharmaceutical and medical device consultant, to step into the unknown. Some said I was brave, others that I was crazy - but I did it and I never looked back.

We had a strong desire to make a change within a space which typically lacked innovation. However, it was imperative that we contributed to improving the understanding of these typically overlooked and conditions - such as Endometriosis, Uterine Fibroids, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and Menopause- just to name a few, hence us making the decision to work closely with a network of universities to conduct research and to openly publish our findings.

Looking back at our achievements, I'm proud to say that we have helped support tens of thousands of people navigating their gynaecological healthcare journeys to date. We've helped amplify the voices of women through our app to advocate for their healthcare - and have partnered with organisations such as Medtronic and the NHS to help distribute our platform. This has all been made possible with the financial support and backing from our early supporters which include Google and the UK government.

Had I not have been brave in changing my career, listening to my own heart, following my dreams, In feeling the fear, and doing it anyway, I would not be where I am today and doing the job I do.

So, my advice to you as graduates, as you step out into the world is to never stop following your dreams or believing in yourself. Take the world by storm and leave your mark on the world. Break new barriers and ignore those who try to hold you back. Be radical in all that you do. It won't be a walk in the park but that is why when you do achieve success it will feel so much greater.

I know that my time at Essex, help set the formative years of my career so thank you for the excellent times I had here as a student. For the experiences and the long-lasting memories that I will cherish forever.

To now be presented with this award, it's an honour and I am deeply touched. Thank you very much.