

Graduation 2012

Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Kwok Yue Ellen Poon

Chancellor, Professor Henson who said such kind words about me, distinguished members of the University, fellow graduands, parents and my dear friends, it is indeed an honour to have this degree conferred upon me. As you have heard, I got my undergraduate degree from Essex in the early eighties. Since then, I have trotted around the globe, been to many places for work and sometimes for fun, but never been back to this University campus. So you can imagine the joy and pleasure that I've had to be back here after all these years, to witness how much this University has grown and that it continues its tradition to be a ground breaking and successful university, both as a teaching and a research establishment.

Whilst I was walking down the memory lane during the last couple of days, I cannot help but to remember that my desire to pursue being an eternal creative and a technologist (an artistic geek if you like) got started here, in the computer department to be exact.

As a teenager, I did my studies in an all girls' school in HK, whereby we were asked to choose between science and art subjects at some point. Our school system was not alone in this, as schools all over the world would want to direct their students towards a discipline of some kind. But I had this notion that I want to do both and I truly believed that I could do them well. I did not receive too much support until I arrived here at Essex where I was encouraged to be creative in technical subjects which was computer science and to be technical in my arts subjects such as Economics and pure Mathematics.

By following this principle, I received good grades and very encouraging remarks for offering up a very different solution as opposed to the standard ones, when I handed in my assignments.

This gives me the necessary reinforcement to follow my belief that I can and will combine my artistic talents and technical skills to achieve something!

This conviction led me to learn more about Computer Graphics whilst doing my Ph.D degree at UCL, it came as no surprise that it soon became my fascination. I realized that being able to draw and design something to have them realised on the computer through inventing some amazing software algorithms and coupled with state-of-the-art hardware, was to be my destiny.

After many late nights, shedding a lot of sweat and tears in front of the computer, success eventually materialized when my work were viewed on screen by the public. Due to its novelty and specular nature, this art form of using Computer Graphics quickly became a trend, affecting everyone from London based advertising agencies to the Hollywood film studios. I am proud to say that some of most memorable and cinematic moments in the past decade have been achieved through this techniques, in films such as Avatar, Star Wars and Toy Story, just to name a few.

It sequently became a business that everyone wants to invest into and spawned an industry that now employs millions of people world wide and provided us with entertainment that enriches our lives.

Recently I was happy to learn that few people I admire enormously had a similar inkling when starting their careers, to pursue a dream of marrying their artistic and technical talents together to change the world.

One of such persons is the founder of Tesla cars, Elon Musk. Tesla is the first electric sports car which goes from 0-60 in 3.5 secs, combining beautiful shape and design with the latest green technology. Mr. Musk is both a designer and scientist for the project. He is also an entrepreneur, creating other companies such as Paypal and SpaceX. Incidentally SpaceX just launched the first commercial spacecraft to the international space station and back.

Secondly I am sure you all heard of Steve Jobs who cofounded Apple, who made us all addicted to our phones and tablet computers. He believed that humanities are achieved by arriving at the intersection of creativity and science!

So to my fellow graduands, standing here in front of you today, I want to congratulate you all from the bottom of my heart that you are leaving one of the best universities in the country, who have prepared you well, so you can step into the world proud and confident, that you are going to do your best and create something amazing!!

Good luck and Thank you!