

Thank you Pro Vice-Chancellor for this **incredible** honour.

And Dr Steinke for your kind words.

But today is about all of **you**. All of you who are graduating and starting a **new**, exciting chapter in your lives. So I want to start by congratulating **each**, and **every one** of you, for reaching this milestone.

As I stand here, I can't help but think back to 2018. When I sat where you are sitting. In my graduation gown, £2 in my bank account, thinking about what was next. I never **imagined**, just 7 years later, I'd be accepting this award.

It **truly feels** like a full circle moment.

And also a testament to the power of **ideas**.

The Marine Diaries started as an idea, shared by three friends. How can we **communicate** ocean science better? How can we get people to **truly care** about the ocean?

I was a **scientist**. I knew **virtually nothing** about communication. I had **absolutely no clue** how to run a non profit.

But I **tried**. I started writing. I watched webinars. I read guides online. I took short courses. And I learnt along the way.

And to be honest, it has not been the easiest journey.

I was made redundant during covid, **just 3 months** into my first communications role - the **first role** where I was really learning skills that could propel The Marine Diaries forward. I was **gutted**.

I have been bullied by people I considered to be my friends, and by colleagues.

And I have worked, **hard**. Maybe too hard at times. **Definitely** too hard at times. Early mornings, late evenings, weekends, and every spare hour in between. To the detriment of my own health. Let me tell you, severe burnout is no joke.

Because I have been building The Marine Diaries for the past **8 years**, **and** working full time.

And I have thought about giving up, **so, many** times.

But all of these twists in the road have taught me great lessons.

And what started as just an **idea**, turned into what it is today. An organisation inspiring **thousands** around the world to take action for the ocean. My **passion**. And my **life's mission**.

I still don't have **riches**. (Although I do have slightly more than £2 in the bank...).

I **still** don't have all the answers.

I **still** have self doubts.

I still **dream** of spending more time in the ocean.

I am **still**, figuring it out.

But what I do know now, is that...

When you figure out what **you love**.  
Discover what you're **good at**.  
And find people **who share** your passion.

Success **will** follow.

It might not be the path you **expected**. But if you leave the door open, you might just find what's **really meant for you**. Something that brings your **skills** and your **passion** together. Something that **lights a fire in you** and makes you want to keep pushing forward. Day by day, month by month, and **year by year**.

A friend, actually a volunteer at The Marine Diaries, once said to me "Consider the journey of your life as a jigsaw puzzle. Each role you step into, each opportunity you take, is a piece of the puzzle. And slowly, piece by piece, the picture begins to form.

Every so often, you take a step back to get the full view. To **admire** your work so far. And **little by little**, the way forward becomes clearer."

The **point** is, the story of your life - takes a **lifetime**. You do not need to go fast.

And **success** isn't just about money, or awards (although they are nice, of course).

It's about finding work you believe in. About waking up proud of who you are, and what you're building towards. Whatever that may be.

So **chase** your dreams.  
**Believe** in yourself.  
Recognise your **strengths**.  
Be **open**.  
**Take the risk**.  
And **above all**, be kind.

And **never** forget, you have the power to **change the world**.

If there's one thing I want you to take away with you today - it's this.

We depend on nature, and the ocean, for our **very survival**. So **go outside**. **Listen** to the birdsong, **smell** the flowers, and really **appreciate** the world around you.

You **don't need** to be a marine biologist, or even a conservationist, to make a difference. Every **single** one of you - whatever path you choose - can act for the future of our shared planet.

So across everything you do, from your personal life to your career, I want you to **ask yourself**: How can I do this more sustainably?

Because then, in 7 years time, when one of you is standing here, accepting this award - you can say: **I did something**.

Thank you.