

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Noppadon Theppitak, Ambassador of Thailand  
At the Business, Education, Music and Creative Arts Graduation Ceremony  
Massey University, Palmerston North  
Friday, 28 November 2014.**

**Chancellor Chris Kelly,  
Vice –Chancellor, the Honorable Steve Maharey,  
Assistant Vice Chancellor, Operations and International, and  
University Registrar, Stuart Morris**

Graduands,  
Parents and family members,  
Faculty members and students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here today to speak to you at this Graduation Ceremony.

To all the graduates - congratulations for making it here in one piece. Oh, and also for earning your degree. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this important time in your lives.

All your hard work has finally paid off. You've proven to your parents how smart you are. Now it's time to prove to them that you can also earn a living. And if you haven't thanked your parents yet, please thank them now.

Because it might not be long after you've moved out of home to seek your own fortune, and to embark upon a fresh chapter in your life...you'll never know... after all that, you might need to move back home again soon.

But don't feel bad about that. Times are hard because of the economy and a few mishaps can happen along the way. In your twenties, this is what you will have to bear in mind. Your life will be full of crossroads and choices. But it's not about making the right choices by the mainstream standard. It's more about making the choices that are right for you. It's about recognizing what really matters to you, and creating your own unique success story. Creativity and identifying your true passion will get you where want to be.

Before coming here, I spent the whole night thinking about what I could say to this wonderful gathering of young, intelligent people that would not get them so bored and put them all to sleep at once.

Well, I have an answer. And luckily, it won't take long. At least I'm sure I'll be done before you snooze off. I promise.

Today, in all this atmosphere of great success and huge prospects for the future, I want to tell you a story of humility. A story about embracing

smallness, and about how when you focus on what really matters, no matter how small or irrelevant it may appear to others, you can finally transform that smallness into something great. In other words, a story that proves that size doesn't really matter. Look at me.

What matters is the ability to filter through all the information clutter, misinformation and peer pressure in this social media rage and internet networking frenzy, and still recognize what really matters. This is why Massey is so extraordinary, because Massey has always stayed true to recognizing what matters. In fact, the relationships that Massey has cultivated with many Thai universities over many years was built on that philosophy.

Thailand is very proud to have such a long history of friendship with Massey University. And I feel heavily the weight of the history that exists between Thailand and Massey University, all the contacts and cooperation over many years.

More than 60 years ago, in the 1950s, Massey University helped set up the faculty of agriculture in a faraway place upcountry called Khon Kaen University, north-east Thailand.

That Massey recognized so early on that agriculture was Thailand's niche is already incredible. But that Massey could pinpoint a university so remote and far from Thailand's capital that, has since grown to become Thailand's educational centre for the whole northeastern region, as well as for Thailand's neighbouring countries, is simply phenomenal.

Massey discovered a smallness that could become great. Massey contributed to bringing knowledge and education to that small and seemingly irrelevant place, until that small place evolved into a centre of excellence, ready to help other smaller places surrounding it.

Today, Khon Kaen University does more than just educating young students from the northeastern part of Thailand. Khon Kaen University educates students from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar, and is doing its part to help local communities prepare for the new regional integration, a single ASEAN community due by the end of 2015.

Massey foresaw Khon Kaen's potential 60 years ago.

Massey realised that Thailand needed help to develop its agricultural sector, and that agriculture was Thailand's vital life line and back bone of its economy. And Massey's limited resources or size didn't limit its vision or ability to recognize that.

Agriculture is the economic foundation of Thai local communities, and the country's livelihood depends on it. Thailand feeds the world from

it. I'm not overstating it when I say that Massey's collaboration with Thailand's universities starting 60 years ago has contributed to Thailand's ability to help feed the world today. Thailand is now the world's top exporter of many basic commodities: rice, sugar, rubber, and even chicken and tuna.

But what really impresses me, is Massey's ability to recognize who to give credit to for Thailand's outstanding performance in the agricultural sector. In 2002, Massey conferred upon His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand, an Honorary Doctor of Science degree. The then Chancellor of Massey, Morva Croxson, together with other senior officials of the university, travelled to Thailand to invest His Majesty with the honorary degree in a special ceremony at the Royal Palace.

For Massey to recognize our King's achievements and life-long dedication to developing agriculture is truly remarkable. It was a way of not only honouring the King but also the Thai people. And by doing so, Massey had indefinitely sealed its friendship with Thailand and Thai people. King Bhumibol made life-long sacrifices to help local communities develop comprehensive agricultural systems that were self-sustaining, eco-friendly and affordable. His Majesty travelled to remote areas where no roads were built, filling in the missing gaps on Thailand's map. He talked to the locals, touching their lives and winning the hearts of his people. I believe that this was the first and only occasion on which Massey has awarded an honorary degree to a ruling monarch. So for that, allow me to personally say, thank you, Massey.

But Massey is not a big university. It doesn't have massive funding like Harvard or Princeton, or any of the elite universities in the United States. But that didn't stop Massey from having a forward-thinking spirit, embracing diversity, talent, creativity and innovation. Because of this, Massey has become New Zealand's defining university. Massey University has helped shape the lives and communities of people in New Zealand and around the world.

Because of its openness and its ability to recognize and appreciate what really matters, Massey has become great in distinction and reputation, regardless of its size. So to you, graduates, I want to stress again, size doesn't matter.

I believe you graduates can be very proud of your qualification from Massey University – in my observations of universities around the world, Massey would have to be one of the finest. It exhibits all the best characteristics of New Zealand education as a whole – innovativeness, adaptability, creativity and a quiet dedication to achieving.

Massey has provided you with a strong foundation on which to build in your chosen career. And, by developing strong links with the wider

world, Massey has cultivated a very strong out-ward looking focus, that I'm sure you have all absorbed during your time here, and will surely benefit from in the future.

Wherever you go, and whatever you will do from here on, you will naturally look for opportunities to contribute to those around you, to building up the society around you – and you will naturally do it with those characteristic and very admirable New Zealand qualities that you have learned to develop during your time here at Massey – creativeness, innovation, adaptability and an out-ward looking focus, reaching out to others, reaching up for better results.....

As you now go out from here, I'd like to suggest that you try to look for opportunities to contribute to society, to try to imagine the potential that can grow out of something small, something doable– not only to think about for example the money that could be made, which will come anyway, but to think strategically about how you can contribute to making this world better, more human, more connected. - and from the seeds that you sow, we don't yet know what are the results that will grow out of that in the future....

Again, I'd like to heartily congratulate you graduates on your achievements: you truly deserve it. And may I also wish you all the very best as you go on from here to pursue your chosen careers.

I'd also like to acknowledge the work of the many lecturers, tutors and other members of staff, for the wonderful work they have all done in contributing to the success of today's graduands. I'd like to acknowledge the support that the parents and other family members and friends have given. You have all become a part of the Massey story – which is a story not only here in Palmerston North, it is a story that reaches out around the country and around the world – it's a story that looks for opportunities to make a difference, that sees the potential of what can be, or what can grow in the future...

Thank you.