



At each Graduation ceremony, one of the distinguished graduating students is selected to deliver a vote of thanks on behalf of all the recent Graduates. For the Spring 2009 Faculty of The Professions ceremony, the nominee from the School of Law was chosen for this honour. Adam Edwards graduated in the double-degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws with First Class Honours. This is a transcript of the speech delivered by Adam at the ceremony on Saturday 10 October 2009.

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Thank you Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Council members, Distinguished guests, Academic staff, Fellow graduates, Family and friends.

It is a great honour to have been asked to present the vote of thanks on behalf of all the Graduates today. I feel humbled by the request.

However, as just one individual, it is perhaps a little difficult to present a vote of thanks on behalf of *all* Graduates, because we are such a diverse group – internals, externals, youngsters who came here straight from high school or after a gap year, and those of us who are given the label of mature-age student. There is also a wide range of disciplines studied, of awards received, and of family and cultural backgrounds.

The one thing that we all have in common though, is this university. It brings us together today, and has been the common thread for all of today's graduates for the past ... who knows how many years? For me it has been 5½ years and two degrees – for some of us it's been much longer than that, for others less.

But that common thread – this university – I think stands apart from other institutions. For one thing, the academic staff here are always very approachable and willing to help. The following probably constitutes a bit of advice for those undergraduates in the audience, or for those graduates contemplating further study. If you knock on a door asking for the answers, you won't get very far; but if you ask for help on where the answer might be found, you will usually discover that academics at UNE are only too happy to talk to you about their favourite subject areas. Possibly at some length!

What is more, that advice doesn't just apply to on-campus students. While I did spend a lot of the last 5½ years on the campus, I also studied externally – as did many graduates who are here today. In fact I know that for some, today has been their first ever visit to the campus. But even for those external units, I still felt that I was a part of the University. The staff to student ratios – as mentioned earlier by Professor Hay – may have been less than ideal for those

external units, but help was usually only an email or a blackboard posting away, and again the academics were generally only too happy to give their time and to help out.

Another part of the support that I found helpful, both on-line and on-campus, was the help and encouragement of the other students. I've made many friends during my time at UNE – some here on campus, and some who I've met fleetingly at intensive schools. There are even one or two who I really only know through their online blackboard postings. But I am happy to know them and happy that they have been able to be a part of my time at UNE

After I finished studying, I have also worked for the last couple of months with Student Administration and Services here at UNE. So I have gained an insight into the workings of the University that not many other graduates would have seen. From that insight, I can say that there are a lot of things that this University does very well – probably better in many respects than the bigger institutions in the capital cities.

For a regional university, UNE does a very good job – from both the academic side and the administration and services side – and I think that all the graduates should be proud of the awards that we are taking away from here today. Both for their own personal achievement and for the standing and quality of the university from which they are graduating.

Finally, I cannot finish without giving a personal thanks to my family for their help, their support and their tolerance. I am sure that all graduates today have their own, different, stories of the difficulties and joys of university study. For me, it was juggling between my study, running a farm and raising a young family. I feel sure that the other graduates would agree that without the sort of support that our families and friends can provide, the job of studying at university would be just that much more difficult.

I really have enjoyed my time here at UNE, and I will miss it. So I am happy to present a vote of thanks, from all of us, to all of those who have made this such a memorable time.

On behalf of all the graduates here today, and those who could not attend: thank you to the University and thank you to all the people, both here and at home, who have helped us to get to where we are at this ceremony today.