

Commencement 2010 Remarks

Good morning and welcome to NJIT Commencement 2010. It is a special pleasure this year to welcome New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, who will receive an honorary doctorate and deliver the 2010 Commencement Address later in the ceremonies.

Among life's milestones, Commencement is an exceptional day for many people. Above all, it is a day that celebrates the commitment and tireless efforts of all those who will soon receive their degrees. Congratulations to you for what you have accomplished as students at NJIT.

Commencement is also an occasion to acknowledge family and friends whose support has contributed greatly to your success. Please join me in warmly applauding those who have helped to guide you along the often challenging path to this important day.

For NJIT's faculty, administration and staff, Commencement is a day to reflect on what we trust we have given to you in preparation for careers in many different fields. Specific knowledge and skills, certainly. But we also trust that we have inspired you to be imaginative, to be bold in envisioning what your knowledge and skills can bring about for continuing personal success and the bettering of society.

Mark Twain, the great American writer and astute social observer, said, "You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." Looking back over the past hundred years or so, one finds many surprising pronouncements by intelligent, educated individuals whose imagination was blurred. They couldn't accept the feasibility or foresee the potential of scientific and technological advances that others did.

Fewer than ten years before the Wright Brothers' first flight in 1903, renowned mathematician and physicist Lord Kelvin asserted, "Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."

In 1946, famed movie-producer Darryl Zanuck said, "Television won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months."

Confidently said in 1977 by the founder of the mainframe computer manufacturer Digital Equipment Corporation, "There is no reason why anyone would want a computer in their home."

Other voices have seen different futures, offered a different message, one that merits special attention today. The pioneering chemist Sir Humphry Davy was a close friend of the poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his perspective on the future was poetic as well as that of a clear-eyed scientist.

Early in the 19th century, Davy wrote, "Nothing is so fatal to the progress of the human mind as to suppose our views of science are ultimate; that there are no mysteries in nature; that our triumphs are complete; and that there are no new worlds to conquer."

Whatever paths you follow as graduates of NJIT, I know that you will always be among those who understand that accomplishments in the present are never ultimate, never end points. We know that your capacity to marvel at the mysteries of the world around us will not diminish, and that you will persist in seeking to change the world in imaginative ways that are both exciting and positive.

Congratulations to the NJIT Class of 2010.