

President's Word

Dear class of 2014,

It is truly a day of good harvest, and you and we stand here with pride. You have earned the degree you have worked for. We often say a degree is “granted.” True, the university grants a document as a testimony of two realities: the student’s success and the university’s educational legacy. It is really “earnt”.

In the last ten years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of degrees granted globally, and even more so in our Middle Easter region. We have more per capita Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D. holders today everywhere than ever.

More than stemming from an intellectual appetite, there is today a craving for degrees. Degrees impress, even if the holders express little quality. Degrees promote, even if the holders are remote from the positions promised to them.

Degrees should be like trophies and medals that honor people for success, victory, service, or exceptional achievement. Degrees should be seen as the fruits of hard work, time, effort, service and accomplishment, but our world wants to see degrees as the quickest growing seed, the quickest recipe for success, with little effort.

We often hear about impressive CVs. I am sure most of you have already prepared or submitted one. So, we may think that the longer the cv, the more numerous the degrees, the better quality person we will see.

Usually, we want to see that a person is much more than their cv, and each Faculty member sitting here behind me knows that their cv represents so much less than what they are, or do, or have. But what a disaster it would be to have your cv present more than we actually are.

I would like to move beyond degrees, however, and talk about the purpose of getting a degree. It is simply called education. Rather, about being educated.

Haigazian University is granting these degrees today, hoping that they will be signs of really graduating educated your men and women.

But think with me. By the educated, we do not mean holding degrees.

Education for us means width and depth. How widely and how deeply we have been shaped so far. Wide, for the world is wide, and information is much, and professions are on the increase, and communication is beyond our ability. We need to get a taste of what 1000 people are doing or thinking or feeling today. Because things are wide, and accessible. Otherwise, we fall behind, are get out of touch, and sound and look as if in another age.

But the problem is what does one gain, if you can follow a thousand things but not move a step forward, into the depth. If you know what a thousand people felt like today but you did not know what to do with the information, what have you gained.

So, let us assume we are doing an exit survey of our graduates on who has been educated:

- An educated person is the one who has developed a knowledge of the wider world. We often call this general education. If you do not know about the larger world, then you will think your world is unique in ways that it is not.
- An educated person is the one who can critically think; think critically about self, others, phenomena, concepts, and developments.
- An educated person is the one who knows how to communicate and to receive and perceive communication. It is one thing to know to speak and write well, but to have the inner space to process what is communicated to you is something else.

- An educated person is one who can construct, build, synthesize, reconcile; one who can bring the pieces together for a good purpose that will last.
- An educated person is one who can follow and repeat the same method of thinking, behaving, working and speaking, while being open for improvement.
- An educated person is one who uses the mirror before boasting, uses the pen before speaking, uses the heart before judging, uses the mind before concluding, uses the skills before celebrating, and one who uses others' experience and wisdom before uttering one's own.
- An educated person is one who enjoys ideas and can play with them, one who befriends words, numbers and other symbols and can create with them.
- An educated person is what the world will always need.

All this is to say that being educated means to capture and process the larger picture on the one hand, but at the same time it means being captured with the deeper picture of life. It is science and faith, mind and heart, rest and work, all together.

If your Haigazian University degree is close enough to the description I just gave, then we have more reason to celebrate today.

You have done well, and I confidently say, you have deserved the degree. Live, therefore, as truly educated people.

Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian
President
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