

Firstly, I want to acknowledge all of today's presenters- these kind people took time out of their busy schedules in order to celebrate the successes of today's recipients- Thank you all so very much.

Winning this award has made me look back at my academic journey in a way that I had not before. I can tell you how much I loved my time at university. I savoured every moment of it. The experiences, the learning- all moments that can never be recaptured. I know that this journey has fundamentally changed the way that I look at the world and the way that I look myself.

The big push through Business School was all consuming. It took up virtually every moment of my existence for 6 years. Now I am 9 months into a very busy and demanding post grad job. I have never really had a chance to look back & reflect on the journey. **Until now.** What is today all about? It has made me think of the sacrifices. The many times over those years where my school schedule did not fit with my family schedule- the times that an essay or upcoming exam was more important than a birthday or a funeral- let alone something as mundane as family dinner.

As much as I miss being an adult student, the truth is a lot of the time it was actually quite lonely. Your fellow students can't understand the challenges you face- simply because they are at a different stage of their lives. And your family and friends can't understand because they have never had to make time for a demanding course load while juggling adult responsibilities- financial and otherwise. In the end, you just have to keep your head down and keep pushing forward and keeping the faith. **This is the life of a mature student.**

Achieving your academic mission as an adult learner is not for the faint of heart. The sacrifices to be paid by you and your family are steep and **the journey is long.** It's a level of commitment that you could not understand unless you had **done it yourself and succeeded.** And that my friends, is a small group. The thought of being in a room, no matter how small, that was filled with people who had overcome the challenges & road blocks to achieve a high level of academic success is an almost laughable idea. **And yet here we are today.**

The collection of people that walked across this stage today is as diverse a group as you could imagine. The journey that has led to this moment would fill a book for each one of them. They are compelling evidence that the best parts of the human spirit are alive and well- **perseverance. Courage in the in the face of the unknown.** Starting out from scratch with the faith that if you put in the hard work and commitment now; your future, and the future of those you love, will be brighter.

My friends I commend you. May the commitment and resolve that got you to this moment continue to propel you towards your life's goals and ambitions. You & your families should be very proud

Ladies & Gentleman, What a fantastic day today has been. As the day approached, I began to realize how special the meaning behind this ceremony is- the members of the organization responsible for today are just as special. **The London Council for Adult Education** and its members tirelessly work to promote and advocate for life-long learning as a means of empowerment and betterment of self. We must promote and support them in their mission, because the stronger this council is, the better the outcomes adult learners will achieve, and the stronger our community becomes.

Ladies & Gentleman, please join me in giving a heartfelt thanks to the London Council for adult education for putting on an amazing event today.