

Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alistair Fitt

Governor of the Board

Members of the senior management team and other dignitaries

Members of Faculty

Dear Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Congratulations to the graduates on your successes and recognition of hard work. Today is your day! Celebrate it! I am sure there are amongst you those who are the first from a family to achieve this milestone – to you a special word of congratulations. For this day only, don't think about what the future holds, worry about the payment of bills or ponder about employment challenges. Be present today – mind, body and spirit, rejoice in the here and now, as today matters!

Thank you to the university for having me share in this day of celebration. It is with deepest gratitude that I receive the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Nursing from Oxford Brookes University. More so as in 2016, 125 years of nursing education in Oxford is celebrated. I want to acknowledge each and every faculty member who has made a difference over the years, for their dedication, resilience and commitment. Nurses are mostly at the brunt of political decisions ... in good economic climate, more nurses are employed, but when cuts need to be implemented, this is where government will cut ... not taking into account that it directly impacts on quality and safe patient care – ultimately the main aim of our service. We have seen health care evolving into a science over the past century with some of the most accomplished discoveries. Yet, inequalities remain around the globe and millions of people, especially in poor countries, continue to encounter the effects of poor quality of health care. We hope to see in the next decades that each person on planet earth will enjoy universal access to basic health care.

Over the past century the essence of care has remained. That of value of and respect for human life. Nurses in particular have the honour to accompany the life span of a human being ... from the first cry at birth to the last breath at death ... we are there. What in particular will be important for the future is to ensure that as health care professionals we remain relevant, part of an integrated health care system, focusing on prevention of diseases, working in an interprofessional manner. This will be possible if nurses and other health care professionals are allowed to practice to the full scope of their education and training.

On a personal level, it is quite a surreal feeling, being here today, especially given my childhood years, growing up in an apartheid South Africa, totally isolated. We lived disconnected from the world, in a cocoon of false protection. However, at the end of apartheid in 1992, we had the opportunity to take jump leaps to catch up with the rest of the world. As a nurse educator and novice researcher I embarked on a journey of the 1st out of country experience in 1994, attending a four weeks course at the Open University in Milton Keynes. So today does feel in some way that a circle is completed. I want to in particular thanks the colleagues who worked behind the scenes on this nomination – it is indeed humbling to know that you thought my work is worthy of this recognition.

Dear graduates, your contribution towards to the future is indispensable, as you are the generation who can build a culture of tolerance. It is evident that more of the same approaches won't work for the future, but we need creative and innovative thinkers that will contribute to systemic sustainability. 'Without ambition nothing gets started, and without perseverance nothing gets finished'. So at the end of today, after celebrating, start to think how you can make that difference. It is possible that in years to come you will be recognised for your work and contribution with an honorary doctorate. And that journey starts today! It reminds me of a story ... when a man asked a sculptor ... how do you make such beautiful things from stone? The sculptor replied: beauty is already hidden there; I just remove the extra stone. Your happiness is within you, remove the worries. Your contribution is within you, remove the barriers. As you embark on the next phase of the journey, remember, today matters and it can make all the difference.

Professor Fitt, thank you once again for promoting me to doctor-doctor. Vice-Chancellor, I accept this Honorary Degree of Doctor of Nursing with gratitude, humility, and great pride and can now refer to Oxford Brookes University, as our university.

Prof Hester C. Klopper

2 September 2016