

USI Communication Science Commencement Ceremony, Lugano, CH  
6 November 2017  
L. Suzanne SUGGS, PhD  
Keynote Speech for awarding the PhD in Communication Science

**Congratulations graduating doctoral students! It Looks like you've made it!**

Undoubtedly, over the course of your doctoral training, you have experienced joy, laughter, excitement, and an incredible amount of growth and maturity. There may have also been moments of doubt, despair, frustration, and the occasional questions, such as "What am I doing? And Why am I doing this?" But you endured and persevered and now you have accomplished a significant milestone in your life. In a few minutes, you will hold a doctorate in communication science, each specializing in a specific area, methodology and topic. This is fantastic and a degree you have well earned. Good job.

However, any thoughts you may have about your life getting easier or that it will return to some sense of normalcy, now that the PhD is done, are not quite accurate. Moving forward stuff gets real and a lot more responsibilities will be placed on you.

You may have noticed during the past few years that circumstances have changed in the world as increasing fragmentation, conflict and dramatic disparities erode public trust in government, institutions and science.

This is widespread and in many ways, it is a global transformation that can be vividly heard from noise originating from the trumpets of darkness that promote hatred, intolerance, bigotry and falsehoods in order to undermine the fundamental optimistic values of humanity and of science.

As researchers and educators, you have a unique and vital responsibility to defend science and the value of knowledge. Science and reason are the tools for the creation of knowledge which in turn provides the foremost path to peace, prosperity and the good life.

Additionally, science and reason are the greatest and most enduring defenses against the trumpets of darkness that pose a real threat to the world and humanity.

There is a darkness on the edge of town, and now, in many respects, you are the foot soldiers in the battle to defend education and research from forces that find knowledge an obstacle to an ideology of selfishness and greed.

Science, the creation of knowledge, is conservative in practice and frequently radical in outcomes. It is an infinite process that realizes no final truths, only findings that will be challenged, tested, confirmed, modified and even rejected in some cases. It is this lack of finality that confuses and frustrates so many people, and yet it is the core of a society that progresses and improves over time.

As part of your future work you must prioritize communication with the public, policymakers, young people, and those who seem to have been forced to the sidelines of society. Inspire young people to value education, motivate policymakers to make evidence-based policy, and persuade all people of the undeniable benefits of education in improving the lives of everyone.

You are among some of the brightest and most talented people in this room and in your communities. And certainly, you know very well that a doctoral degree path is a road less travelled and one that ends with both rewards and responsibility.

I congratulate you once again for what you have accomplished, and I offer you a small bit of personal advice... Have courage in what you do, remember and trust your doctoral training, conduct your research and teaching with the highest levels of integrity, humility, compassion, and always act with a ferocious commitment to excellence.

Congratulations to each and everyone you of you!