

Valedictorian Speech for the Botho University Virtual Graduation, 10th July 2020

Graduate of the Class of 2019, Faculty of Computing, Botho University

Mr. George Green

Hello everyone, my name is George Green from the class of 2019, having completed my undergraduate (Honors) Degree in Network Security and Computer Forensics. Let me start by saying that it's an honour and privilege to have been selected to give a graduation speech for the class of 2019. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude for receiving the Festus Mogae Award for Academic Excellence. To be honest, I didn't expect to receive an award during this time but words simply cannot express my excitement and how proud i am of this achievement.

Let's go back to the beginning of my journey in Botho University. It was in 2015, I still remember walking through the gates and straight into admissions department. The thing that caught my eye was the quirky design of the office and the sheer number of applicants. At the time, I only had a vague idea of wanting to study computing. I finally got helped by a staff member and soon as I saw Bsc (Hons) Network Security and Computer Forensics in the brochure, I instantly knew that's what i wanted to do. In fact, I was so interested that I explained what the course was about to person who assisted me.

As I started varsity, I realized that there was something uniquely motivating about the environment. Either it was that, the excitement or a combination of the both. I had a nagging question in my mind, which was “What would happen if I gave my all to this course?”. From there late, slept and became one with the course. As you can imagine, with that much focus directed to something, I excelled, not because I was uniquely gifted or some kind of genius but because of the amount of work I put in. One lesson I've learned throughout the years is that if you're going to learn something, attack it with curiosity, make it “a game” if you will. That way it changes from something you are forced to learn, to now becoming part of your identity. Trust me, this is a more natural way to learn. Also find a way to apply it, otherwise you will forget over time. The mind is like a muscle, if you use it, it becomes stronger and hence the mind requires its own form of exercise.

The challenges I faced actually became an advantage. For example, in 1st year we did all those CSS presentations and like everyone, I was nervous and spoke with a shaky voice but I decided to jump in head first and over time, I became decent at public speaking with the help of my lecturer at the time, Mr Matlhabaphiri. I believe that this skill is absolutely invaluable and will continue to serve you, especially during those times you'd need to pitch your business ideas in the future.

So, we have arrived at this point, we've completed our respective courses, so what's next? My advice to all of us is to set goals and make detailed plans to achieve them.

I know it sounds cheesy and a little cliché but I cannot overstate the importance of this. As human beings, we need a sense of progression to feel fulfilled in life and goals help to focus your intention in a particular direction. Believe me, you have kick yourself in the butt to establish a routine, because if you don't, one will be imposed on you either by your future employer or people who are time wasters. So live life by design rather than merely reacting to it. This is a new chapter in our lives and go out there and find those jobs and build that small business you've been thinking about. I don't say like this like you'll wake up and suddenly have all those things but just be persistent and a little obsessive about it.

Once again, I'd like to thank the friends I made at school who not only inspired me but provided friendly academic competition. I'd like to thank my lecturers who were mentors to me, it's been an interesting ride, I hope our programs continue to improve for future students. Finally, i'd like to thank my parents for encouraging me to go above and beyond what was expected of me and even till this day, I enjoy the benefits of working hard.

In closing, thank you so much for bestowing me with this prestigious award. I am incredibly humbled and honoured. To my fellow class of 2019 completing students, let's continue applying ourselves and achieve things we can be proud of. It may not be "sunshine and daisies" all the time and there will be hard times like the pandemic we find ourselves in but have grit and continue forging your path. Thank you!