

Good afternoon,

I'm very proud to be here today, as one of the graduates, speaking on behalf of the classes of 2008 and 2009 from the Professional Masters Dual Degrees in the Carnegie Mellon | Portugal Partnership. As you may know, this partnership consists of Master of Science of Information Networking, Master of Science of Information Technologies – Information Security, Master in Human-Computer Interaction and Master in Software Engineering.

Besides me, everyone in this room should be proud of what this ceremony stands for.

First, Carnegie Mellon University, represented by President Cohon and the Portuguese Universities – Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade de Aveiro, Universidade de Lisboa and Universidade da Madeira, represented by their Rectors. These universities, with all their faculty and staff, along with the Portuguese Government were able to set up a collaboration that has proven itself to be successful. As a student in the first class I anticipated organizational issues. However, only minor problems occurred and even those were rapidly handled. Taking that in consideration, I would like to personally thank everyone from all the universities that helped us work without having to worry about side issues. From bureaucratic issues to housing in Pittsburgh, all the problems were resolved effectively.

Second, the industry representatives, which are here on behalf of some of our top organizations. Each of them are considered a leader in its domain, and by sponsoring this program, they confirm their leadership position. They have realized that people and knowledge are some of the most important assets an organization can have, and so, by having their professionals engaged in these programs, those organizations are working on in order to maintain themselves at the top. It's important to say that the support given by these organizations was fundamental in our success. These organizations were able to identify working areas where students

could focus their research or specific projects to be executed by the students.

Third, of course, the graduates, who struggled and worked hard to get to this point, so that we can now say “I was there, I accomplished this.” It was hard but it was also fun. It was difficult, but it was also incredibly worth it.

Like the rest of the graduates from the class of 2008, I started the program in August 2007, and felt completely overwhelmed by the amount of work that we had to do. But I thought “This will get better and smoother...” Actually, it didn’t! When the second semester began, again I thought “This will get easier.” But it didn’t... When the 3rd semester began, I was already convinced “This will not get better, so, let’s get to work. That’s something that I also learned from this program. I learned how to manage time and work smarter by prioritizing tasks and understanding the value of each task, but also to always have fun. And yes, we did both of them.

Besides being extremely demanding, the professional masters were also technically complete and always focused on the applying knowledge on problem solving for the industry. By graduating from these programs, we got that same technical knowledge but also a new way of looking into problems, a new way of finding solutions. Overall, we got a whole new way of thinking and working. This knowledge is perhaps the most valuable that we could get from it. And one that can be applied throughout our entire career, no matter what kind of work we might be doing.

From endless homework assignments to the wonderful Pittsburgh winter, we overcame everything and got to this moment, when everyone is returning to the “real world.”

And that’s when the real challenge happens. One year after returning to my company, I can say to you, graduates, that this is a completely new challenge. We are now officially “Agents of Change,” and our organizations and people that make them move, are expecting us to be able to bring new ideas and new ways of looking into problems and finding solutions.

This is what we need to be prepared to do. And that is hard, but also very rewarding. Those organizations want and need us to bring different points of view, different solutions and ways of working. But also, there will always be resistance. Resistance to someone that asks “why?” and “why not?” to someone that dares to raise their hand and say “I can do this in a different way.” And yes, that’s also what “Agent of Change” means. It means to be brave and stand for our thoughts, to be fair and honest with our thoughts and ideas, to be humble and accept that other persons’ ideas can also be great.

So, now, at this moment, I say to you, graduates don’t be afraid to go back and change your world. But don’t forget that when we want to introduce change, we must always look at one important factor – people. That’s what will make things work. Besides looking and thinking in all the technical details, also think about how to win people into your change, how to establish trust and, by doing that, change will happen.

For us graduates, it’s time to take the responsibility and work hard. But working hard doesn’t have to be boring and uninteresting. Like one of our instructors used to say “If you’re not having fun, then you’re not doing it right”. Follow this lead and you’ll be successful. If you can make your work interesting enough to make it fun, then, it will be a good work for sure.

Finally, I would like to wish the best of luck to all of you, but I also have a request for all of you. Don’t forget that we are now part of something that makes us different, and in this case, difference is good. In order to get a stronger presence and influence in industry, we need to maintain contact. We need to give life to a network of alumni, where we can discuss our ideas, where we can get support and feedback. It is our responsibility to do so.

Thank you.