

The 2008 Celebration Award Ceremony
Loughborough University
Sunday, August 31, 2008, 2.00pm, Shangri-la Hotel

SPEECH BY DR STEVE LAI

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PSB ACADEMY

Professor Shirley Pearce, Vice-Chancellor, Loughborough University,

Members of Loughborough University,

Distinguished Guests,

Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to all of you.

1. Let me begin by warmly congratulating the graduating class of 2008 from Loughborough University.

Alma Mata

2. I feel very privileged to be here today. I have attended many graduation ceremonies. But being at the Loughborough University's graduation ceremony always brings fond memories. Like you, I have studied in this university and obtained my PH.D with them. I stayed for three years at the Hazlerigg– Rutland Hall, one year in Sandwich, Kent and one over year in Loughborough.
3. It's been a while, but the memory of my experience with the University, the friends I made there and the lessons I learnt remain fresh. I'm sure like me, you too, will leave today with many happy memories of your friends and the lessons you have learnt, both inside and outside the classroom.

4. To graduate from an esteemed university such as Loughborough University gives me a warm feeling. I applaud you for having completed your programme and graduating from the university. Loughborough University is renowned for its excellence in teaching and research. It has already been awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize, an award that honours UK universities and colleges that demonstrates outstanding work at world-class level and excellence, five times. This is an achievement equalled only by Oxford University. I have no doubt that your status as an alumni will stand you in good stead in your future endeavours. It is a steadily growing investment you have made.

Globalisation of Education

5. The world we live in today is constantly changing – some are on a revolution, some are on an evolution. The economy of the 21st century is knowledge-driven and highly competitive. It is global, highly mobile and dynamic. This is so, even for education. PSB Academy has gone into the region with overseas campuses in China, Vietnam and Indonesia. Our venture located in Urumuqi, Xinjiang, set up last year, is another milestone in our regional foray. Moving forward, we are looking to having more quality colleges in China.
6. Such an economy presents great challenges that to some, may seem too daunting to overcome. Yet, amidst this dynamic landscape also lies an ocean of opportunities. They are yours to identify, analyse and pursue. As some will say, “there are no more fish in the shallow waters anymore”. So you have to do special things. Doing just the regular things is necessary but not sufficient.
7. I am an Industrial Chemist by training and have always been fascinated by science and chemistry – how an element, through its interaction with another substance, can transform into something else totally different. Combine opposing elements together, and the result can be disastrous. But if you combine complementary elements together, the most wonderful things happen. This the chemist call Synthesis.
8. In the same vein, sustainability and success in the business world really is about combining positive elements in your environment and transformation.

It's about embracing the spirit of discovery, adapting to changes, and creating possibilities. With a good dash of curiosity and a sense of adventure, the ball is literally in your court to make things happen. You have to synthesize something novel and unique with your knowledge, experience and situation and make a difference. Who would have thought that BreadTalk, a very successful bakery, and Qian Hu, a very successful ornamental fish breeder, can be such great success? Making bread and breeding fish must be an age-old profession.

9. You have already equipped yourself with an excellent education foundation, pursued in Asia, the world's fastest growing region. As you embark on your quest to pursue your dreams and aspirations, always remember that the only limits to what you can achieve are those you place on yourselves. Continue to build on your strengths and apply your talents to what you truly believe in. Add that sense of inquisitiveness, sprinkle in a good measure of passion, and a dash of confidence – and you will be amazed by what you can achieve.
10. Once again, my congratulations to you all who finished the race in flying colours and heaps of praises for all those who stood by you through difficult times. Lastly my best wish to you in your great journey ahead, go and make things happen.
11. Thank you.