

Leadership in Challenging Times
Occasional Remarks
RMIT Vietnam Conferring Ceremony

Professor David Wilmoth
Executive Director Strategic Projects
RMIT

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Mr President, Mr Consul-General, Professor Le Quoc Huy, graduates, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

The conferring of degrees is an important occasion in the life of the university. It marks the culmination of years of work and commitment to success for you, graduates of the Master of Systems Engineering, the third intake, the class of 2002. I offer you the warmest of congratulations on your achievement today.

I recall the excitement of the first intake many years ago and the enthusiasm of today's group is no less.

The difference is that now you are part of an expanding, maturing community of scholars and practitioners with RMIT International University Vietnam and RMIT globally.

There are now 700 students and 100 staff located at the beautiful Ho Chi Minh City campus and at project sites around the country.

The Master of Systems Engineering program and its graduates are very special to RMIT in Vietnam. It was the first degree program offered in Vietnam. Its students come from a wide range of backgrounds but have in common a strong commitment to Vietnam's social, economic and environmental development. They exemplify strong leadership.

Make no mistake: through your achievement today you are being recognised as leaders. But leadership brings responsibility as well, and that's what I want to talk about this morning - leadership in challenging times.

Challenging times?

- Isn't Vietnam on the road to prosperity, with consistent high levels of growth? Yes, but we must work hard to together to alleviate poverty which persists.
- Isn't Vietnam popular for trade and investment? Yes, but it is important that in areas such as investment policy there are consistent rules. Vietnam is a popular tourist destination but international tourist tastes are notoriously fickle.
- Isn't Vietnam the safest country in Asia? Yes, but look at the tragedy that has occurred just across the road.
- Isn't Vietnam opening up fast to the world? Yes but we must ensure that integration with the global economy keeps the rich historical development of Vietnam and does not wipe out the cultural heritage such as buildings and neighbourhoods which could be seen to stand in the way of progress.
- Isn't technology developing fast in Vietnam? Yes but as systems engineers you will know that there isn't a technological solution to every question.

Vietnam's future needs systems solutions and you are now systems engineers.

You more than anyone see that

- You cannot expand transport without thinking of the whole of cities and regions
- You cannot make crash helmets without thinking of road safety campaigns and compliance with standards
- You cannot develop one part of a river system without looking at the whole of the catchment.

More than ever before, Vietnam needs systems solutions for complex challenges. You are the leaders who can bring those solutions as well as leadership of your professions and your communities.

You would not have achieved what you have today without the support of your parents, your partners, your family, your friends, and I salute their contribution to your achievement.

I also thank the staff of RMIT and RMIT Vietnam, and particular Dr Louis Doukas who is unable to be here today, and Ms Kim Trung, RMIT Vietnam's very first employee.

You and your colleagues from Systems Engineering form the backbone of the RMIT alumni in Vietnam and I encourage you to join and be active in alumni affairs. It offers a good opportunity for networking and career development.

There are challenging times ahead. I wish you the courage to try, including the courage to fail. If you engage with the community issues that are important, if you seek to lead, you will find RMIT with you. I wish you every success.

Chuc mong nam moi. Xin cam on.

Mr President, that concludes the occasional address.