**Year 12 Graduation 2017 – the chaos theory of careers**

**Dianne Marshall**

Good morning – and a very warm welcome to everyone. This is a really special day as we join together to celebrate the finish of high school and your time here at the Senior College. Welcome to our special guests, sponsors, parents, carers, family, friends, staff and most importantly our graduating Year 12 students.

Being the Director of the Senior College is an incredibly rewarding position. I feel privileged to have been able to spend time with so many of you – to be part of the unique educational experience that is on offer here at the senior college, and to help you start on the journey to achieving your dreams and aspirations.

Earlier this year I was at the NSW Secondary Principals’ Council State Conference and saw a presentation by Dr Jim Bright. He was talking about ‘The Chaos Theory of Careers’. I found it really fascinating as it challenged the assumption that careers are stable and predictable. As you move into the post-school stage of your life, he was stressing the importance of realising that career paths are not linear, and how difficult it is to predict the future.

Chaos theory says that something as small as the flutter of a butterfly’s wing can ultimately cause a typhoon halfway around the world. He showed us this insurance company advertisement from about ten years ago.

*Show video:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv3k07BvhGQ>

You can see that a tiny change in initial conditions led to a dramatically different outcome. Modern career paths involve: change, complexity, chance and uncertainty.

*Slide 1: Chance events* (progressive revelation)

Chance events can be such as:

* *Being in the right place at the right time* – You have finished a degree and a company is looking for graduates in your field of specialisation.
* *Being in the wrong place at the wrong time –* An industry has collapsed and the town you are living in is in crisis and you have to retrain, or relocate.
* *An unplanned work or social interaction –* This happens a lot when you meet someone, everything clicks and an opportunity arises which works for you.
* *An unexpected injury or illness –* It may mean that your chosen pathway is no longer available to you and you look for something else.
* *An activity you unexpectedly enjoyed/did not enjoy –* Such as going to an antique show with a friend, developing an interest and making a career in antiques.
* *An unexpected insight/message/vision/calling –* Seeing a TV show on the plight of refugees in a country and then volunteering to help. It was so rewarding that you decide to train as a nurse.
* *An unplanned move or change of residence –* Getting us out of our comfort zones, meeting new people, changing universities etc.

Jim Bright then spoke about the concept of ‘Luck Readiness’.

In the context of the chance events it really resonated with me.

*Slide 2: Luck Readiness* (progressive revelation)



I believe over my life I have developed ‘Luck Readiness’ and that you will too.

It is characterised by:

* *Flexibility –* Are you prepared to change the pathway you have set for yourself?
* *Curiosity –* Have some fun with these changes. Think about what it might be like if you take this opportunity.
* *Optimism –* Are you a glass half-full or half-empty type of person?
* *Being prepared to take risks –* This is my favourite because we need risk takers in our society who are prepared to make mistakes and learn from them.
* *Persistence –* As the proverb goes “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again”.
* And finally *Adaptability –* Because we are living in a rapidly changing world, we are all adapting on a daily basis whether we realise it or not.

Yes, there will be times when you are frustrated and feeling out of sorts because nothing seems to be going right. Be assured that by being ‘Luck Ready’ you will find new opportunities opening up which may lead to other pathways. Enjoy each of these transitions as you have hopefully enjoyed your transition period here at the Senior College.

In fact, just coming to the Senior College was for many a big leap into the unknown, requiring a level of flexibility, optimism, and willingness to take a risk. I feel confident that each of you in your own way has developed some of the characteristics of ‘Luck Readiness’. You are going to be able to recognise, create, utilise and adapt to opportunities occasioned by chance. On behalf of the staff, I wish you every success in the upcoming examinations. I also wish you luck for your many and varied future career paths.

Today we acknowledge student achievements and contributions to the college. Shortly each of you will be presented and we will hear some of your accomplishments. However, before we start these presentations, I would like to acknowledge the support and cooperation of many people and organisations.

* Firstly, our partners, Southern Cross University and TAFE NSW. This place is unique and offers many opportunities for our students.
* Also a big thank you to the staff of the Senior College who work tirelessly to support each of you to achieve your potential. We have high expectations and we know that each student here has been given the knowledge and skills to embrace the world and make a significant contribution.
* A special thank you to the parents and carers who have supported their young adults through the stress of assessment tasks and examinations.
* To our sponsors, many of whom are with us today and will be part of the ceremony. Thank you for your generous support. The College greatly values your sponsorship.
* Finally, a special thanks to everyone involved in the organisation and running of today’s ceremony.

It now gives me great pleasure to announce the top ATAR award for 2016.

Thank you.

**Contributor details**

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Dianne has been Principal of Coffs Harbour Senior College since December 2013. Currently she is also a President of NSWSPC North Coast Region and a Member of the SPC Executive with the Student Wellbeing Portfolio and Senior Schools Interest Group. Her current interests include riding her e-bike, walking and reading.