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**and**

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**Graduate Commencement Speech  
Assembly Hall at Vasaparken  
University of Gothenburg**

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***Life as a Network***

**Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to everyone!**

**Dear representatives of the Richard C. Malmsten Memorial Foundation, Head of the Graduate School, Dr. Maureen McKelvey, Director of Studies, Dr. Ann Veiderpass, Masters Degree Program Coordinators, faculty, staff, distinguished guests, family members and friends, and, most importantly, the Master's degree recipients, it is my great honor and privilege to be speaking to you today on this truly special occasion.**

**Thank you for this opportunity.**

**I come to the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, Handelshogskolan, from the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the United States of America, where I have been a Professor since I received my PhD. I have also held faculty appointments at MIT, Harvard University, and Brown University, which is from where I received my 4 college degrees, including the Master's and PhD. In addition, I have had wonderful experiences as a faculty member at several universities in Europe, including Sweden and Austria.**

**This is only my second visit to Gothenburg, although I have taught at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, where I lived with my family at the Wenner-Gren Center. The Wenner-Gren**

**Center is named after Axel Wenner-Gren, the internationally active Swedish businessman and former owner of Electrolux, the renowned Swedish company. Wenner-Gren realized the importance of international exchanges and was instrumental in having the Center built close to the beautiful Haga Park, where, over the years, hundreds of researchers' families from around the world have lived, while the researchers made their discoveries. My daughter, Alexandra, even attended daghis in Stockholm.**

**I have also spent time in both Umea and Linkoping, both known for their universities.**

**I have always felt very at home in Sweden. Since I am of Ukrainian heritage, perhaps one of my ancestors was Swedish given the historical influence of Sweden on Ukraine over many centuries. Of course, Sweden is renowned for innovation and leadership in numerous industries: banking and finance, high technology and telecommunications, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, construction, household appliances and products, trucks, consumer durables, fashion and apparel, and design. Hence, products conceived, designed, and produced here are appreciated very much globally.**

**My first time at your outstanding School of Business, Economics and Law was this past March, as a new Visiting Professor of Operations Management. I became aware of this opportunity through an advertisement in one of my favorite publications, *The Economist*, which intrigued me. I applied and was offered the position.**

**During my relatively short association with the University of Gothenburg I have been very impressed by the faculty, the administrators, the staff and the students. The School of Business, Economics and Law, Handelshogskolan, is a jewel both architecturally and intellectually and I am very excited to be part of your community as a new Visiting Professor and to be speaking to you today.**

**My research and teaching focus on supernetworks, which are networks of networks. I study transportation and logistics, including supply chains, economic and financial networks, telecommunications and the Internet, social networks and knowledge networks. An underlying theme of my work has been sustainability and, more recently, due to interests from my students, my Supernetwork Center research group has also been involved in studying humanitarian operations and logistics, because the number of**

**disasters is growing, as well as the number of people affected by them. We have also been studying quality and R&D in innovation networks. My students and collaborators constantly challenge me and together we work synergistically on difficult economic and business problems**

**Life is a journey and throughout we take part and are supported by many different networks.**

**To reach this graduation ceremony (or, in network terminology, this destination node), here in Gothenburg today, each Master's degree recipient took a different route or path in a network. Some of you traveled miles from different countries to come and study here for your graduate degrees, whereas others had shorter trips, perhaps only a short bus, ferry, or train ride. You all converged at the School of Business, Economics and Law to master new skills, to acquire new knowledge about the business world and organizations, to work on team projects, and to obtain greater practical experiences with industry and insights into the complex network economy. You learned how to manage resources, whether financial, natural, or human and how to make difficult decisions through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. You learned the language of business that will allow you to communicate across disciplines and national borders.**

**You, graduates, challenged yourselves, took on risks, worked harder than you ever thought possible, and made sacrifices, to make your dream of a Master's degree a reality. You thought deeply, analyzed and synthesized materials, and engaged in hours of discussion with your colleagues and faculty.**

**You also, through the process of advanced education, developed lifelong friendships with the great community that is the School of Business, Economics and Law. For your outstanding efforts and hard work you are here today and I salute you and celebrate your accomplishments. Nothing in life that is worth getting and achieving is ever easy.**

**As holders of Master's degrees in Economics, Finance, Innovation and Industrial Management, International Business and Trade, Management, Marketing and Consumption, Logistics and Transport Management, and Tourism and Hospitality Management, you will find that you may, in the future, be needing one another, both professionally and personally. Through the links in your new**

**professional networks you will obtain invaluable information. Just think, through your Finance classmates you can get advice as to which investments to make (and which to avoid) and how to finance a new company that you may wish to establish or to expand an existing one. From your Economics classmates you can find out the latest economic trends and how they will affect you and your employer. Your International Business friends will make sure that the products that you need are manufactured and delivered around the globe and your Logistics and Transport Management colleagues will ensure effective supply chains. Your Marketing colleagues will help you to market your ideas and products. From the Management concentrators you can obtain advice as to how to manage your resources, especially the important human kind. Your Hospitality and Tourism Management friends will help you to plan that perfect vacation.**

**As you begin your new journey in life, equipped with the hard-earned Master's degree, and choose other paths in your life's network, let me share with you the following suggestions and advice, if I may:**

- 1. Make sure that you find your passion, if you have not already done so, so that your work is a labor of love. Always give your very best. Never consider a task too demeaning. There will be challenges along the way but doing great, honest work in a field that you love is a reward in itself and will get you to that destination that you aspire to.**

**I recall meeting Dr. Elinor Ostrom, the first female recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, at an invited lecture that she gave last year at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research has demonstrated that local action can collectively make a positive, global impact. Through your endeavors, whether you work for a large, multinational company or a small company, you can make a positive global impact. Sadly, she passed away this Tuesday, June 12.**

- 2. As you journey through life, mentor and help others. Support and assist those who are just beginning their careers and, as you move up the ladders of your organizations, extend a hand to others. Be kind and nice to everyone that you encounter. A chance meeting may lead to a great opportunity. For example, three years ago, I was stuck in a middle seat in a row of three, separated from my husband and daughter, on a flight from**

**Boston to Frankfurt. Because of wonderful conversations with my seatmates (and no sleep at all that night) I was invited to teach a course in Harvard's Executive Education program on portfolio optimization (to which, naturally, I had to include information on financial networks).**

**Those that you assist may become future business partners and will remember how you helped them in their careers. I am reminded of Dr. Paul Samuelson, the Nobel laureate in Economic Sciences (1970), whom I would regularly see at MIT when I was a Visiting Scholar at the Sloan School of Management. His work in spatial and regional economics inspired a lot of my research in spatial networks and supply chains.**

**He was about my height, always wore a bowtie, and had a great appetite. I would often see him in the dining room or at the coffee shop at the Sloan School of Management. Samuelson would regularly exchange some pleasantries when he would see me and my favorite one during an elevator ride with him to get a snack was the following, "Anna, have you proven any good theorems lately?"**

- 3. Treasure your family members and your friends and make the most of the time that you spend with them. They will always be with you during your journey, if not in person, then in spirit, and will be there to support you during the downtimes and to celebrate, as we are doing today, during the uptimes.**

**Swedes, from what I have seen from my two decades of association, are role models of how to balance family and work life. Be proud of your heritage and culture and share it with others. My mother fled Ukraine, during the period of World War II, at age 18 and never saw her parents again. My father could not return back to Ukraine and his hometown until 50 years had passed. I was born in Canada of parents who were classified as "stateless." But they raised me in the Ukrainian language, traditions, and culture. Their resilience even, after, subsequently, immigrating to the US, and having professional careers as an engineer and teacher, respectively, has made a lasting impact on me and continues to inspire me. Never forget where you have come from and always finish what you start. Adaptability, persistence, and resilience are essential to professional success in business and in our personal lives.**

**And, finally, dear graduates, change the world for the better – whether through the new companies that you establish, the new ideas, products, and processes that you generate for your employers, and/or the new networks that you build. I know that you will.**

**Tack sa mycket och skal!**