

Graduates, today you proudly celebrate your accomplishments from the past four years. Those accomplishments are your own, but they were built on the generosity of others—your family, your friends, your professors. That combination of pride and generosity calls to mind the words of Khalil Gibran, who wrote that “Generosity is giving more than you have and pride is taking less than you need.” Gibran learned generosity from the United States, which received him as an immigrant from Lebanon and gave him, like you, the opportunity for an education.

He also knew the importance of humility, as he merged his Lebanese heritage, his American upbringing, his Catholic Faith, his Parisian education, and his fascination for Sufi mysticism into a single, multi-faceted voice through which he gave voice to the pulse of the world.

Gibran was the quintessential immigrant; he respected his culture of origin, but embraced new cultures and identities. He embodied the American dream, coming to the United States with nothing and achieving success through work and study. Gibran was also a believer in dreams, seeing in dreams the gate to eternity.

Dreams, these days, seem unwelcome, and dreamers are cast as invaders. Generosity has given way to “me first,” and pride prevents many from listening to anyone who doesn’t look or think like they do.

Even in this gray era, however, there are still places where dreams live on. All of you, for example, came here to pursue a dream, and you have spent your time at SMU as part of a community of different ages, different nationalities, different races, different identities who are united in a shared desire to impact the world. You have lived together, learned together, travelled together, researched together, and created together, and those experiences, I hope, have shaped you and will stay with you well after you leave.

On behalf of the SMU faculty, I congratulate you, and I wish you all success as you continue your journey. I hope you have been transformed by the lessons you have learned during your time here and most of all, I hope you never stop dreaming. The world needs you to dream, and to be generous enough and humble enough to dream about something larger than yourselves; it is that sort of generous dream, when coupled with humility, that will lead you to serve and change the world.