



Chancellor Cordova, Dean Deolalikar, graduating Class of 2007, your parents who share your proud achievement, ladies and gentlemen,

Twenty-one years ago, I was seated just as you, feeling a little ridiculous in my commencement gear. I am not sure how it happened, but I am back to lecture you on 'It's Time to Get Real 101'. It is a great honor for me to be here, and a vindication for the many challenges I have faced in my career.

During my third semester at UCR, Dr. James Pick, then Director of the GSM Computing Facility, made me his Research Assistant. I went through a crash course in an ancient language called Fortran, SAS, and a GIS software called ArcInfo. Carrying 16 units, interning 40 hours a week at a bank, and working 20 hours on campus, I could only get to the Geography lab late at night to plot the maps we needed for our projects. It was at this time that I had an experience somewhat similar to that of the little kid, who says to Bruce Willis "I see dead people". Only, instead of dead people, I saw dead data, doing exactly what the dead people were, walking around telling stories. Every day I entered new data at GSM, I would return to the lab late at night to see a new story, vividly drawn in different patterns and shades of color.

Possessed, I began to see the same potential in everything I encountered, every course I took, every program I wrote, every assignment I worked on. I spoke to my marketing professors about it, my urban planning professor, my boss at the bank. Recognizing a glazed look in their eyes, I gradually learnt to change the subject. Instead, I focused on the work that Dr. Pick assigned me, and was rewarded by co-authorship of several published papers. My marketing professors could not see the relevance, so Dr. Pick chaired my thesis committee. It related to mapping lifestyle clusters for six states in Mexico. Today, a similar analysis of the U. S. is a hot seller on the spatial marketplace.

After graduating, I continued to work with automating maps at a photogrammetric firm for five years before starting my own firm, Engineering Systems, in 1991. I was, at last, able to indulge fully my fantasy: using the technology to change the way information is shared and decisions taken.

Why do we need graphics to organize ourselves? Simply because a picture is worth a thousand words and a million bytes; because our cognitive processes intuitively recognize patterns far more efficiently than we can read and understand reams of written reports and our mathematical ability to interpret gigabytes of electronic spreadsheets; and because organization-wide information is best summarized visually. Time, as a constraint, dictates we project pixels just as we speak sound bytes.



Let us put into perspective the role that education plays in shaping our individual lives and our perception of community.

In a lifelong search for the perfect cherry blossom, *The Last Samurai* concludes that every single blossom is perfect. True of every creation of Nature, each one of us is perfect in our individual uniqueness. Why is it then, that instead of celebrating this perfection, we spend our lives seeking to conform to ideals others impose on us? Why do we look at ourselves through the eyes of others, when all we need is simply to experience our real selves as already complete? In trying to conform to expectations that we think others have of us, we warp our individuality to become sorry caricatures of our real selves.

Genesis says the cause for this is knowledge, which teaches us to discriminate, to classify, to organize, to structure everything around us in an attempt to understand the world. In order to learn, we are taught to distance ourselves from our world as subject from object. As soon as we begin to model our world in this way, we lose intimate contact with the very world that we are trying to understand. This disconnection causes our downfall in the eyes of Perfection and is the root of all conflict: me against you, us against them.

Do not get me wrong: our education and learning, which shape our thought processes, is essential for our survival and progress. In order to benefit most from it, however, we must know how to use it judiciously, as a tool for the specific purpose for which it is designed. To appreciate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, it is essential that we nourish its very roots by returning to the source. It is necessary for us to reconnect, real time, to an undifferentiated view of ourselves as a completely integrated, indivisible and harmonious part of our environment. Unless we do, our disjointed personalities will use the knowledge we gain to manipulate others and our environment that we treat as separate from ourselves, instead of using it for the benefit of everything with which we identify. As the former, we end up as thwarted, warped personalities condemning the natural order of things and scorning sincerity in others; as tyrants wilted into predictable coronary postures; and as dejected people imposing our frustration on others.

It is not an accident that the Level 5 Executive of Jim Collins so closely resembles a Zen Rishi in his egoless humility and a Karma Yogi in his passionate, unswerving, dedication to his profession. Class of 2007, as managers and administrators, we share his responsibility to balance science with art in fulfillment of our unique global identities.