

Lincoln Tsang

Speech for receiving Doctor of Science honoris causa at Aston University,
Birmingham, United Kingdom.

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Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished faculty, graduands, honoured guests,
friends and families,

Congratulations to the Aston Class of 2026!

It is a tremendous privilege to stand before you and share this special moment. Thank you, Associate Dean of the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Biosciences, for your generous words, and to the University's Senate for this honorary degree. This recognition is especially meaningful with my wife and daughter here to celebrate.

Aston holds a special place in my heart. Over forty years ago, I worked here with remarkable mentors, colleagues, and international collaborators in translational cancer research, united by one goal—to improve cancer treatment. Aston's spirit of innovation and collaboration, exemplified by the discovery and launch of temozolomide – an anticancer drug now routinely used in clinical practice for treating rare brain cancer, shaped my career and continues to inspire me.

While Aston has changed—new buildings, new faces—the community and its values endure. Diversity, inclusion, and collaboration are more important than ever. As you step into an interconnected world, your ability to work across cultures and disciplines will be key to your success.

You are entering fields shaped by rapid technological change. Technical skills matter, but people skills—empathy, communication, teamwork—are just as vital. Use technology as your co-pilot; let it enhance your work, not define it.

Uphold integrity as your compass, and surround yourself with principled people. The most meaningful moments in your career will come from quietly doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. Integrity earns trust and respect and will guide you through challenges. Don't fear mistakes or failure; they are powerful teachers. What matters is learning, adapting, and moving forward with honesty and courage.

Stay curious. Challenge assumptions and explore new ideas.

As you embark on your journeys, remember that your career will involve taking risks, and your career path may change. Embracing risks and change is necessary for growth and can be refreshing, opening doors to new opportunities with perspectives. Sometimes, stepping out of your comfort zone is the catalyst for renewal and innovation. Patience is equally important—careers are marathons, not sprints. With patience, you can weather setbacks and appreciate achievements.

Cherish your family and loved ones, nurture your relationships, and prioritise your well-being—they will be your greatest allies as you navigate the uncertainties and rewards of your career.

My academic foundation at Aston, together with lifelong learning, empowered me to build a diverse career spanning life sciences, government services, regulation, and law. This breadth has allowed me to tackle real-world challenges, often involving complex issues that require novel approaches to provide practical solutions. Alongside my professional work, I have been privileged to support the vulnerable and those in need through pro bono involvement, assisting charities and advocating for the rights of others. These experiences have been deeply rewarding and remind me of the importance of giving back and standing up for those who cannot always stand up for themselves. We each have a covenant with ourselves and our community—to use our skills and opportunities to support others, transform lives, and help better society.

You never stop learning. So, as you begin your journeys, be bold, be curious, and be principled. Success comes from hard work, tenacity, perseverance, patience, and the courage to take risks and change.

You are the future. Each new generation replaces and excels the last. Embrace this momentum and make your mark.

Congratulations once again. May your careers be rewarding, varied, and sometimes even bewildering. I hope that in forty years, you find fulfilment in your chosen path as I have in mine. Keep dreaming big. Enjoy life and seek fulfilment in all that you do. I wish Aston continued success in championing inclusion, enterprise, and transformation.

Thank you.

