

Opening Remarks

Thank you, Dean Danos, for both your kind introduction and for all you've accomplished as leader of the Tuck School for the past twenty years. This institution is very different than it was when I graduated in 1988; I would say it's even better. Congratulations to you on your distinguished career as our dean, and I wish you and your wife Mary Ellen all the best.

I also want to wish my best to our new dean, Professor Matt Slaughter. I've been fortunate enough to get to know Professor Slaughter over the past few years, and I can tell you he's a very talented educator, researcher and thought leader, while also having a real and exciting passion for both Tuck and Tuck students. Welcome, Dean Slaughter.

It's a true honor for me to be with you this afternoon, participating in the celebration of 276 exceptional individuals who are successfully graduating from the country's oldest — and best — business school. Congratulations, Tuck Class of 2015, for this remarkable achievement. You should be proud of yourselves.

But I know you're not the only proud people here today.

The entire, incredible Tuck faculty is proud to be with you, celebrating your achievement and, I hope, celebrating the hand they've had in your success. The Tuck faculty is what makes this school truly unique. I know firsthand how special they are; thirteen of the faculty here today were also here when I attended Tuck. Congratulations, faculty.

Your support systems — your parents, partners, family members and friends — may be the proudest of all, though. Their beaming faces clearly communicate how loved, encouraged, and celebrated you are. Their sacrifices of finances, energy, and time, helped get you here. They're truly the unsung heroes of today.

When I graduated Tuck, my father was in attendance, too. This was incredibly important to me as he was one of the key influencers in my life – someone who counseled me, shaping how I look at life, my career, and how I understand what success truly means.

These influences never really leave you, nor does the importance of having a great support system. Even today I have my own support system in attendance. My wife Gabriela and my sons Martin and Franco are here today. Thank you for coming.

But support systems and influences don't always come in the forms you expect. One of the other most influential, important people in my life is General Juan Velasco Alvarado. I am grateful for him and the impact he's had on my life. This fact may surprise you when I tell you who he was and what he did to my family.

In 1968, when I was nine years old, my family and I were living in our homeland of Peru. That year, General Velasco led a coup d'état, using the Armed Forces to seize absolute power, close down Congress, and depose the democratically elected administration, exiling the sitting president. At the time, my father was the General Manager of the Central Bank and was seen as a threat to the new regime. Velasco made unfounded accusations against him in hopes of throwing him in jail. My father was forced to make a difficult decision. Under cover of night, he first escaped from Peru, temporarily leaving his family behind. Six months later, my mother, my five brothers and sisters, and myself, left early one morning in an escape similar to that in the film "The Sound of Music," hurrying out of the country – away from the rest of our family, our friends, our language, and our lives.

You can imagine how difficult this was for a boy of my age, and for the rest of my family.

We eventually made our way to the United States where we had to begin all over again. My father took a position with a bank, many rungs lower down the ladder than he'd been on in Peru. I had to start at a brand new school, forced to make

new friends, convincing them the boy with the strange accent was someone worthy of acceptance.

General Velasco had threatened us, forcing us to leave the land we loved. He made life miserable for the vast majority of Peruvians, hobbling the economy for years to come.

Yet, today, I can stand here and say I am thankful for him. I count him as a powerful force of good in my life. I can even say: I'm glad he did what he did to us.

How could I possibly see him this way? To me, it comes down to having altered a key internal default setting.

(Holds up cell phone)

Think about the default settings on a new phone, for a moment. The Bluetooth is automatically on, the brightness is at a certain level, and the ringtone sounds like a robot falling down the stairs. When you get a new phone, you check those default settings to make sure they're right for you. If they're not, you change them. You go against the defaults. For the most part, it's quite easy to change those settings.

Our world has default settings, too. They're a prescribed list of ways we're informed and instructed to look at the world around us. They come at us socially, culturally, and through the media. The default settings give us our perspective on all we experience. Those default settings are helpful tools. But they're not always right. In fact, those default settings can frequently stand between you and your success in life. Sadly, they can be much more difficult to change than the settings on your iPhone.

Today, I'd like to talk with you about three areas where you may be tempted to default to the world's given settings. They are: adversity, your career, and how you define success.

Adversity

General Velasco was an adversary of my family and I. That word “adversary” shares the same root as the word “adversity.” Both describe people, situations, or occurrences that seem to keep us from getting where we want to go. The world’s default setting tells me I should look at him as an impediment to my progress. But I don’t want to see him that way. I want to see him as something that impelled me toward progress.

Without him, I might never have made it to the United States. And if I’d never made it to this country, I might never have received a world-class education. I never would’ve attended a prestigious undergraduate school. And I definitely would never have had the opportunity to study at — and graduate from — Tuck. Without this education, I never would’ve gained the tools I needed to go on to a career in banking here in the United States. And I never would’ve gained the experience needed for me to return to my homeland of Peru and help reshape its banking industry, its economy, and, now, its education system.

Adversity is not necessarily an obstacle. It doesn’t have to be something you avoid or simply endure. Instead, I’ve learned to see challenges as opportunities. If I choose to, I can use them to my advantage, instead of trying to figure out how to get away from them.

In 1990, my father called me from Peru asking if I’d consider leaving my job as a Wall Street investment banker to return to my homeland and help him as he sought to purchase a bank in Peru and turn it around. Now, this bank wasn’t just any bank — it was the absolute smallest bank in all of Peru. I knew I wanted to, at some point, return to Peru and work alongside my father, but on the smallest bank in the entire country?! That didn’t sound like a great opportunity. My father, though, was never one to see adversity as simply a challenge. He saw it as an open door. He told me, “Carlos, don’t think of this bank as the smallest bank in Peru. Instead, think of it as the 25th largest bank in Peru!”

After committing to building up Banco InterAndino, we sought out investors and partners, careful to always describe the bank in positive terms, focusing on its potential, not negative ones. And, I'm happy to say, over the last two and a half decades, my team and I have turned that initial banking platform into one of the biggest retail banks in all of Peru, and one of the best performing in all of Latin America.

Viewing adversity this way is important to me, but it's also what I look for in potential employees and executives who want to move up in our businesses.

In fact, when I have my eye on promising executives in my organization, I don't make their jobs easier. An easy job tells me nothing about them. (It also tells them nothing about themselves.) Instead, I challenge them.

Every year, we take a group of young executives to the World Economic Forum. It's a wonderful experience for all of us as we get to hear from powerful heads of state, leading thinkers, and economic strategists. When we first arrive, I take the executives aside and give them their passes for the week. Everyone gets white, all-access badges -- except one. I choose one person I want to challenge and test, so I give them a green badge. This badge is the badge of an administrator. Can you imagine how this executive feels?! The green badge means they have to be the one running to make copies, getting food orders, and serving the team. The green badge means they cannot attend the speaker sessions. They have to stay outside with the rest of the administrators, running errands.

I'm not doing this as a punishment. In fact, in some ways, I'm doing this to reward them because I see something in them worth calling out and encouraging. So after I give them their green badge, I walk away and watch. I'm watching to see what they'll do.

The brightest, sharpest, and most determined of them do whatever it takes to get inside those speaker sessions! The one who received the green badge last year pretended to be a waiter, swapped badges with someone else, and eventually figured out how to personally meet the President of Mexico!

When executives keep adversity from holding them back, I couldn't be more proud. It lets me know they're the kind of hard workers who see adversity as opportunities, and instead of shrinking from them, race toward them. I want this quality in myself, and I want this in the people I work with.

So, change your "adversity" default. Change it from "avoid" to "seek out." When you do that, you'll find yourself running toward challenges instead of away from them, earning the rewards you deeply want (and need) on the other side.

Career

You will spend the vast majority of the rest of your life on your career. More than the time you spend with your family, more than the time you spend on your hobbies, with friends, even sleeping. So, with something that important -- that takes up that much of time, your most valuable resource -- it's vital your "setting" is right.

When I graduated college, I took a job in Peru. I was like you: excited for my first job out of school, ready to pay back loans, and make a name for myself. The first day, my manager handed me a stack of American news magazines and told me to translate certain articles from English to Spanish. That was all he wanted me to do. I couldn't believe it. So, I spent the day translating, then walked back to my boss, handed the translations to him and said, "Today is my first day here. It's also my last day here. You don't have to pay me; you get today for free. But I can't spend my life doing work like this." And I quit, right then and there. I just walked away from a respectable, stable, paying job.

I walked away because I knew I couldn't stay in a position that asked so little of me, or asked the wrong thing of me. I wanted a job that moved me, stirred my passions, and helped me become the person I knew I was meant to become.

I found another job and the same thing happened: I found myself unchallenged and bored. So, at my father's urging, I drew out a 10x10 grid in a notebook and committed to staying with the job for at least 100 days. Sure enough, after 100 days, I still found myself unmotivated and unchallenged. I turned in my notice on the 100th day.

Eventually, I found my calling, and have been doing what I would consider my life's work for the last 25 years. I may not have discovered that calling if I'd stayed with my one-day job. Or even the hundred-day job.

The world's default setting says you should take the easy position, or the one that pays the most, or the one that everyone expects you to take. But what if that job doesn't stir you? What if that job isn't the kind of job that wakes you up in the middle of the night with an exciting idea or a solution you simply have to write down? What if it doesn't bring you joy?

I know many of you have jobs lined up that will start right after graduation. I couldn't be happier for you. But I want you to truly consider that job — and any other job you have in your life. Think about it carefully: is it a one-day job? Is it a hundred-day job? Or is it a lifelong learning opportunity that will grow you and shape you and help you do the things in life you're determined to do?

The second job I had after graduating Tuck was at Citibank on Wall Street. My manager came to me one day and asked for a list of possible candidates for a leadership position. I made out a list of people I thought would be ideal for the high-ranking job. My boss considered the list, then turned to me and said, "Carlos, I believe you're the right person for this job." I was stunned. I just couldn't believe it. I turned him down because I thought the job was too advanced for me. Honestly, I was afraid.

I called my father and told him what I'd done. He said, "Carlos. I understand. Some day you'll be ready for a job like that." (Pause) No! That's not what he said! He said, "Carlos, are you crazy?! You get back there and you tell him you want that job! You may not feel ready for the job, but you are completely equipped for it! You are ready!" So, the next day, I went to my manager and told him I was just joking the day before and I'd gladly accept the position. Thankfully, he hadn't filled it yet!

The world's default setting is to shrink away from challenges in your career, or to think you don't have what you need. You're graduating from Tuck today. That, alone, tells me you have what you need. But you have to remind yourself of this, especially when you are faced with a challenging opportunity.

(Holds up cell phone)

So, change your "career" default. Change it from "a good job is easy money" to "a good job challenges me." Turning off this default moves you from fearing failure to fearing something far worse: stagnation.

Success

Success is the most difficult of all of the perspectives to shift, because, for most of us, we already know the world's default setting and we know what the setting should be. Still, it's hard for us to translate that knowledge and insight into decision-making and action.

The world's default setting for success is to define it as what you do for yourself. But we all know, deep down, success is what you do for others. Yet it's so hard to live that way.

As an investment banker on Wall Street, I lived the fast life. It wasn't quite the "Wolf of Wall Street" level of craziness and debauchery, but my co-workers and I worked very hard and played hard, too. I remember on days when we were bored and wanted a little excitement, we'd get up early and buy a bunch of a single company's stock on the London exchange. Then, while we waited for the American markets to open, we'd go treat ourselves to a big breakfast and wait. As people

woke up and heard about Citibank buying up mass quantities of that stock, overseas, they'd follow suit, buying it up, too. We'd finish our breakfast, go back to the office, then sell our now inflated stock at a nice profit.

We didn't do this for the money, really. We did it because it felt like "success" to us: playing -- and beating -- the system. But it didn't take me long to realize this wasn't true success. It always made me feel empty and hollow, hoping my career would become something more than just a way to earn money as fast and easily as I could.

I realized success is about changing a world. (Changing *the* world is a big task.) I decided to choose one part of one part of the world to change. For me it was Peru because I wanted more for my country.

So, from then on, every job I took, every task I was assigned, I viewed as ways to prepare me to do something good for the nation of Peru and its people. Whether it was working as an investment banker; or being a trader, running and managing a team; or starting a new division; or going out on my own, each stage molded me and taught me so I could make an impact on Peru, based on my experience.

My life is a testament to the power of education. I truly believe education changes lives. Armed with an education, almost nothing can stop someone.

Everyone in the world has incredible potential. Sometimes they just need help unlocking that potential. Education does that. It gives people the tools they need to grow and become productive members of society, building businesses, impacting the economy, and raising standards of living.

The more people are educated, the better it is for everyone.

Because of that, I decided to change a world — Peru — and one part of Peru — the education system. Even though Peru's economy has grown faster over the past two decades than any other in Latin America, our education system is dead last in the 65 worldwide countries measured by the OECD. Dead last. It's terrible. There

are multitudes of private schools, but they're hardly better than the public schools. The only difference is: they cost money to attend.

Peruvians deserve better. They deserve more. So I partnered with another Peruvian with a mind set on reforming education in Peru, as well as IDEO, the famous design firm, and we created Innova Schools. Each school is designed to be affordable for the emerging middle class, academically excellent, and replicable. Though Innova is currently the smallest company in our group, it's taking on the biggest challenge in our country!

To me, changing a world for the better through education is success. It's true success. It's not the first thing people think of when they hear about me, or search for me on the Internet. But, in my eyes, it's far and away the most important.

So, change your "success" default. Change it from "success is what I do for me" to "success is changing a world" because nothing makes you feel more successful than helping people become who they were meant to become.

Concluding Remarks

As you leave this institution, you will find yourself surrounded by people espousing the world's default settings. They'll live by them, they'll talk about them, and they'll encourage you to live by them, too. Misery loves company, right? But you have the chance, today, to commit to seeing the world differently. You can decide, right now, that from today forward, you'll do what you can to question every default setting the world offers you. You can commit to seeking out those voices that test your unique perspective and keep it fresh so you stay focused on what's true and right, not just what's considered accepted wisdom. You can get off the well-worn path and go the way *you* are meant to go.

Choose to see adversity, your career, and success from the right perspective. Act on that new perspective. Let it change you, and let it change a world.

I'll leave you with this: when I moved back to Peru 6 years after graduating Tuck, I was surrounded by an attitude toward work and challenge best summed up in a

Spanish phrase I heard very often: “Si, pero...” For those of you who don’t speak Spanish, it’s Si – S-I – pero – P-E-R-O. It means “Yes, but...” That was the default setting I was surrounded by -- “Yes, we could do this, but...” “Yes, in theory that’s what we should do, but...” There was always an excuse attached to the possibility of any great idea.

I hated this default setting. It didn’t strike me as true, and it clearly wasn’t helping my business or our nation. So, every time I heard the phrase “Si, pero...” I stopped whoever was saying it – whether myself or someone else -- and I said, “Let’s not say that anymore. Instead, change just one letter. Instead of saying ‘Si, pero...’ let’s say, ‘Si, Peru.’”

“Si, pero...” was getting us nowhere. “Si, Peru” – meaning, “Yes! We can! No excuses!” – would open up to us a world of possibilities.

You get to choose today if you will live in a world full of obstacles, or one full of possibilities. Will you have an attitude of “Si, pero” or “Si, Peru”? Will you follow everyone else, or go your own way?

(Holds up cell phone)

So, today, I want you to change your default settings. I want you to change them to “Carlos settings.”

Change your adversity setting to “seek them out.”

Change your career setting to “challenge me.”

And change your success setting to “change a world.”

If you live according to these new settings, nothing but success – true, lasting success – awaits you.

Thank you, and congratulations.