

Scott Urges Graduates to Fight Dragons Of Ignorance, Fear, Exclusion, And Apathy

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Alfred, N.Y.--Dragons do exist. But they don't look anything like the fire-breathing monsters that some early explorers and cartographers thought lurked in unchartered ocean waters. "These dragons use words like biological and chemical warfare," said Ruth Scott at Alfred University's recent mid-year commencement. "They use language, that precious elixir of civilization, to poison the wells--the minds of their followers. Through their inane and irresponsible use of language, they pit person against person and stifle the birth of communication." "Who are these abusers of language?" Scott, a member of the University's Board of Trustees, listed talk show hosts like Geraldo, radio piranhas like Imus, scavengers like the paparazzi, Congresspersons like Jesse Helms, and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. "I only name them because their camouflage allows them to cover up the real dragons," added Scott, owner of Scott Associates, a consulting firm in Rochester. "Their real names are ignorance, fear, exclusion and apathy." Scott told the 125 graduates that they must discard dialogue and expressions which figuratively and literally destroy our ability to be human beings. "If we continue to spread ignorance and encourage those who are good at it by buying their products, watching their shows and voting them into office, we will be consumed by the dragon's fiery breath of ignorant banter and his minefields of hatred," said Scott. Collaboration and futuristic thinking will kill the dragon of fear, according to Scott. "It's that fear," she said, "that keeps us looking in the mirror and saying, like the evil queen in Snow White, 'Who is the greatest of all?' instead of surfing the 'Net and connecting with people all over the world who all have something unique from their cultures to offer us and the world.'" "No self-respecting dragon of apathy," said Scott, "will set foot in a place that is lit with knowledge, that is devoid of the shadows of fear and where men and women respect and communicate with each other." Scott sent the graduates out to battle the dragons, urging them to use language with respect. "In invisible ink, beside your diploma," said Scott, "are the Latin words Draconian Intercessor Summa Cum Laude--Dragon Slayer With the Highest Praise." Scott, who received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at commencement, is secretary of the Board of Trustees, chairs the Student Affairs Committee and is a member of the Finance, Strategic Planning, and Executive committees. She served on the Rochester City Council for 12 years and was the Council's first president. She received the 1987 Distinguished Service Award from the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and served on the Board of the National League of Cities.