

Thought Leadership From The Dean



Welcome to the Journey: Purpose, Perseverance and the Doctoral Journey



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Scholarly Snapshot

"In this message, Professor Henderson welcomes doctoral students into the deeper purpose of scholarly life. Drawing on years of experience mentoring researchers, he outlines the mindset needed to thrive: one built on clarity of purpose, disciplined perseverance, and the willingness to transform. This piece sets the tone for the months ahead by reminding readers that the doctoral journey is both personal and academic — and above all, worth the struggle."

Introduction

Embarking on a doctoral journey is unlike any other educational experience. It is not a sprint, nor is it a series of academic checkboxes. It is, instead, a deliberate act of transformation—a season of deep reflection, rigorous intellectual engagement, and sustained personal evolution. As Dean of Monarch, I have had the privilege of walking beside hundreds of doctoral candidates over the years. Each journey is unique, shaped by the individual's background, research interests, and life commitments. And yet, across all these stories, there are three universal pillars that carry scholars through: purpose, perseverance, and a developing doctoral mindset. Whether you are just beginning your program, working through coursework, or knee-deep in your dissertation, I invite you to take a step back and reflect—not just on your topic, but on



your why. Why did you begin this journey? Why does your research matter? And what kind of scholar, professional, and person do you hope to become along the way?

Purpose Is Your Anchor

In the world of doctoral research, clarity of purpose is what keeps you grounded when the process becomes difficult—which it inevitably will. Purpose is the emotional and intellectual anchor that helps you navigate the ambiguity, complexity, and occasional frustration that comes with high-level scholarship.

At Monarch, we believe that doctoral research should be more than theoretical. It should matter—to communities, to industries, to nations, and ultimately to you. Purpose transforms your work from a project into a personal mission. It brings energy to long evenings, clarity to complicated questions, and resilience when you encounter setbacks.

I often ask students, “Who are you doing this for?” Sometimes the answer is family. Sometimes it’s a professional community. Other times, it’s a long-standing intellectual question that simply won’t let go. Whatever the case, purpose brings meaning to your efforts. It is not merely about getting the degree—it is about contributing to something greater than yourself.

Perseverance is a Practice, Not a Trait

One of the most dangerous myths about doctoral study is that it’s reserved for the exceptionally brilliant or uniquely gifted. The truth is far simpler—and far more hopeful: success in doctoral studies is primarily about consistency. Perseverance is not something you are born with. It is something you build through routine, reflection, and resolve.

There will be moments when the work feels heavy. There may be feedback that stings, data that doesn’t cooperate, or ideas that seem just out of reach. In these moments, the temptation to stop—or to delay—can be strong. That’s where perseverance becomes



critical. But perseverance doesn't mean never struggling. It means not allowing struggle to define you. It means getting back up. Refining. Reframing. Restarting.

As the Japanese say in judo, “nana korobi ya oki”—fall down seven times, get up eight. It is a principle taught to beginners as a way to instill courage and resilience from the very beginning. I believe this saying belongs just as much in the doctoral research journey as it does on the tatami mat. You will stumble. That is part of the training. What matters is that you stand again—with insight, with resolve, and with a clearer sense of direction.

As a practical tip, I encourage students to build writing into their weekly rhythm, even when they feel uninspired. Set realistic goals. Celebrate small wins. And don't underestimate the power of academic community—whether it's your supervisor, your cohort, or fellow alumni, connection reinforces momentum.

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Winston Churchill

The Doctoral Mindset is One of Transformation

Doctoral studies are not only about what you learn; they are about how you become. You will not be the same person at the end of your doctoral journey as you were at the beginning—and that is exactly the point. The doctoral mindset is fundamentally one of transformation. It teaches you how to think critically and systemically. It shows you how to live in the question, how to balance humility with authority, and how to move from curiosity to contribution. This mindset also requires emotional maturity. It involves managing ambiguity, engaging constructively with criticism, and learning when to step forward and when to listen. It is as much about character as it is about content. At Monarch, we aim to cultivate this mindset by supporting both the academic and human development of our scholars. We are not just building researchers; we are shaping global leaders, ethical contributors, and reflective practitioners.



You Are Not Alone

Many doctoral students assume that struggle is a sign of inadequacy—that if they were “really ready,” it would feel easier. Let me assure you: difficulty is not a sign you’re failing. It’s a sign you’re engaging. The doctoral path is meant to stretch you. And while much of your work will require solitary focus, you are not alone. Monarch is a research community. You have access to mentors, colleagues, alumni, and a global network of scholars who are walking the same path. Reach out. Ask questions. Offer support. You’d be surprised how many people are asking the same questions you are, quietly and privately. The most successful students are not necessarily the most confident—they are the most connected.

A Question to Reflect On

As you step into this season of your doctoral path, I leave you with a question:

What kind of scholar—and person—do you hope to become by the time you graduate?

This is not a rhetorical question. I encourage you to write your answer down. Tape it to your wall. Return to it often. Because there will be moments when the deadlines, logistics, or pressure threaten to drown out your deeper reasons for being here. And in those moments, your vision will be your most powerful tool.

Academically yours,

Professor Dr. Jeffrey Henderson

Dean of the School
Monarch Business School Switzerland



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