“Everyone has a deficiency, so don’t try to hide it,” said Kristen Cox during her commencement address at Utah State University Eastern on April 25.

Cox, executive director of the Utah Governor’s Office of Management and Budget since 2012, spoke to some 200 graduates attending the college’s 77th commencement in the Bunnell-Dmitrich Athletic Center.

In her address, she told students, faculty and guests that she tried to hide her blindness from people by refusing to use her cane. As a result, she fell into a construction-site ditch containing cold water.

In reflecting upon her speech, Peter Iyere, USU Eastern vice chancellor of Student Success, included that anecdote in a summary he shared with faculty and staff about “Lessons Learned from Ms. Kristen Cox.”

Cox performs her day-to-day duties without the ability to see, but has not let the loss of her sight stop her from achieving at work or enjoying the outdoors. She was born in Utah and credits her mother for her work ethic and determination.

She earned a bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University in educational psychology. She was appointed to a position with the Department of Education in Washington D.C. by President George W. Bush. She was also secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities and held positions with the National Federation of the Blind.

Inspired by her words of wisdom, Iyere called it one of the best speeches of his life.

Here is a summary of take-home points that he gained from her address:

1. Everyone has a deficiency – so do not try to hide your deficiency from the world. She tried to hide her blindness from people by refusing to use her cane and fell into a ditch containing cold water in a construction site.

2. View your deficiency as simply something that makes you do things differently from other people. While other people use their sight to read the budget, she uses braille to read the same thing; so, why worry if you can’t use your eyes?

3. When you reach the crossroad in your life, don’t be afraid to take the “leap of faith”; one can only achieve greatness by stepping out of the comfort zone. When she did not know where to go next during her training with other blind people on how to find their way around, her instructor told her to take the next step even though she was not sure where she was going.

4. Learn to solve problems creatively. When a young blind kid was told he could not play tag, the kid came up with a creative solution by telling the adult to give the players that were not blind a container with pebbles inside. The rattling of the pebbles in the container as the sighted kids moved around enabled the blind to locate them during the game, and he successfully played the game.

5. Chunk It. When we set big goals for ourselves and need to address significant challenges, we need to begin with the end in mind but then break down the task into smaller chunks. If we work on “bite-sized” chunks on a daily basis, we can achieve big results over time. When she travels, she avoids getting overwhelmed by not worrying about how she would get to her final destination. Instead she breaks the trip down into smaller chunks—first, get through security; second, find the gate; etc. Makes anything that seems overwhelming become doable.