

Opening Remarks, General Commencement Exercises

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Pangulo Alfredo Pascual. Mga kasapi ng Lupon ng Rehente. Mga opisyaes ng UP system. Mga panauhin galing sa gobyerno at diplomatic corps. Mga mahal nating alumni. Mga bise tsanselor, dekanon't dekanan, direktor ng UP Diliman. Mga mahal kong kapwa guro.

Mga "stars of the day": ang mga magsisipagtapos. The women and men behind today's stars: mga magulang, mga lolo't lola, tito't tita, kuya, ate, bunso at sa mga graduate student, mga asawa't anak.

Isang maaliwalas na umaga sa inyong lahat. Maayong buntag sa atong tanan.

The sunflowers of UP Diliman join me in welcoming you to our general commencement exercises.

Napaaga ang mga sunflower ngayong taon. May mga dalawang linggo na sila, nagmamadali kasi, sobrang excited.

Maige na, ang sagot ko sa mga taga-maintenance noong "na-alarma" sila sa maagang pagbuka ng mga bulaklak. Marami kasing recognition rites na nauuna sa general commencement exercises. Kasing halaga ng Oblation ang mga sunflower para sa mga photo-op ng mga magsisipagtapos.

Kaya hirap na hirap ang mga sunflower. Hinihila para sa mga selfie. Yinayakap, aba, mukhang tinatanan pa.

Tapos napaaga ang tag-ulan. Yuko na ang mga sunflower, ngunit hindi sila sumusuko. Pinipilit pa nila na makatindig at makangiti.

Watching the sunflowers and their fans, I thought of the expression: "Stand up in the light," popularized recently by US Justice Secretary Loretta Lynch when she visited Orlando, Florida to comfort the families of those killed in the mass shooting.

It is a good phrase, a way of urging people to take courage rather than sulking and complaining in the dark.

UP faculty and students are not the type who boast of achievements but just today, let me do a bit of that, and for good reason. Early this morning as I was preparing my opening remarks, a song came to my mind "You are the sunshine of my life." Permit me a corny moment as I change the lyrics of the song: you are the sunflowers of my life, the sunflowers that stand in the light. Each day, I draw inspiration from watching you work, listening to you explain what you do.

You have stood in the light with your tenacity, in and outside of classrooms. I thank you for the way you have plumbed the seas to unravel its mysteries. I thank you for roaming the land from Batanes to Sulu to better understand ourselves, our humanity, our world, with research into our languages, history and culture, our flora and fauna, our micro and macro environments.

Of late, UP Diliman has taken to the skies, exemplified by Project Noah and DREAM's projects, using radar technology to determine risks for flooding and other disasters. This year, we leaped further, much further, with the launching of Diwata-1, our first Filipino-built microsatellite that ushers the Philippines into the Space Age.

We stand up in the light too whenever we tackle social problems and there are many student-led projects of this type, such as a bike share program

from engineering students that has provided 60 bikes, with many more to come, for dormers.

I offer special thanks to an interior design class from the College of Home Economics, a class that is graduating today, that raised 1.3 million pesos within a semester, which they used to design and implement the renovation of a center for deaf youth in Payatas.

Taos-pusong pasasalamat sa mga estudyante, guro at kawani sa pagsuporta sa Manilakbayan noong Nobyembre. UP Diliman hosted some 700 lumad or indigenous peoples from Mindanao for a week. They came to Manila to build up support for their struggle for land, and schools for their children.

There is much to be thankful for, and this includes a successful year of hosting the UAAP (University Athletic Association of the Philippines) competitions, a season that gave us a new date of pride. On May 5, 2016, our men's and women's football teams gave credence to international ratings of universities: we, the country's number one university, beat, back to back, the 2nd and 3rd best universities. It was the first victory in UAAP history for the UP women's team and, for the men's team, the first in four years.



That dual victory showed how driven UP students can be, the teams dedicating their games to the memory of Rogie Maglinas, a member of the men's football team who died in February 2016 after a courageous battle against cancer. His teammates, from football as well as from other varsity teams, took time off from studies and athletic practice to be with him throughout his stay at PGH. They were with Rogie to the end, texting me their sorrow as Rogie took leave. I shared their grief that afternoon getting the text, "Chansy, wala na si Rogie," but found strength too when they came out of their mourning, resolute and vowing to play for him.

They played, they won. They stood up in the light for UP and for the nation. As I have told our varsity players repeatedly, ang tagumpay ng UP ay tagumpay ng bayan.

It is the indomitable spirit of Rogie and his teammates that the batch of 2016 must bring into the world. It is a tough world out there, but I believe we – your families and UP – have given you the knowledge, the skills and, most importantly, the mindset for you to engage the world.

UP has trained you, to a fault, to be tough and to be assertive, which is fine. But understand, too, that to stand in the light, in your homes, in your communities, in your workplace, you must be compassionate, as much a source of comfort as you are of strength.

Maraming pong salamat, daghang salamat.
Mabuhay ang mga Iskolar ng Bayan.