

Prop. Fidel R. Nemenzo, DSc

Tsanselor

Dr. Michael Lim Tan, ang ating dating Tsanselor at ngayo'y panauhing pandangal, mga miyembro ng Lupon ng mga Rehente, Pangulo Danilo L. Concepcion, mga Pangalawang Pangulo at mga Opisyal ng UP System, mga Bise Tsanselor at Opisyal ng UP Diliman kasama ang mga kapwa-guro, mga REPS at kawani, mga bisita natin mula sa ibang UP yunit at ibang pamantasan na na-nonood sa ating live-streaming; at higit sa lahat, mga magsisipagtapos at kanilang mga magulang at guardian, isang magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.

Nagagalak akong makasama kayo sa isang nai-iba at tiyak kong di-malilimutan na seremonya ng pangkalahatang pagtatapos. Pagkatapos ng mahigit apat na buwang pagkaka-kulong sa ating mga bahay dahil sa pandemya sa kabila ng takot at agam-agam para sa seguridad natin at ng ating pamilya, pangangapâ at trial-and-error dahil sa biglaang remote o online learning, sa wakas nakarating kayo sa pagtatapos.

Lahat tayo ay nabigla sa bilis ng mga pangyayari dulot ng pandemyang COVID-19. Kakaupo ko pa lang bilang Tsanselor kinailangan kong itatag ang UP Diliman COVID-19 Task Force upang tumugon sa public health emergency. Dahil ang komunidad ng UP Diliman ay binubuo hindi lang ng mga estudyante, guro at kawani, kundi ng humigit-kumulang 56,000 residente, lalo nating naramdaman na ang UP at ang mas malawak na komunidad ay magkaugnay.

Sa maraming usaping kailangang tugunan, kayo mga mahal naming estudyante, ang pangunahin sa aming isip. Hindi lingid sa aming kaalaman ang inyong pinagdaanan. Maliban sa pag-aalala sa pag-aaral at pag-agapay sa online learning, naranasan din ninyo ang mga katulad na pagsubok sa maraming pamilya noong kasagsagan ng enhanced community quarantine.

It was in this context that we, as administrators and faculty, grappled with the question of what to do with the disrupted second semester, under a compassionate and flexible policy for teaching and grading. In Diliman, we argued for the option of a non-numerical grading system, recognizing that the grading scale we applied in previous semesters cannot be used to assess the performance of students during a time of anxiety and disruption.

Nonetheless, the story of the last four months is not just one of uncertainty, disruption, anxiety and social distance, but also of empathy, solidarity and selfless-giving.

UP Diliman has been in the forefront in fighting the virus and protecting our people against its impact. We are bringing our university's best minds across different disciplines together to produce evidence-based policy recommendations and solutions to current problems.

But it is not just through intellectual contributions and volunteerism that we serve our country. Equally important, we have shown that the pandemic does not stop us from being engaged citizens. UP plays a dual role as knowledge producer, and social critic, from a position of evidence-based scholarship and moral courage. This role should be recognized as a distinct service to the nation, even in the time of COVID-19.

As you leave behind student life, you will enter a world that is wracked by high rates of unemployment and the constant threat of being infected by COVID-19. The only certainty we know is that, the world as we knew it before the pandemic — is gone. The post-COVID world will be vastly different.

Along with the search for a vaccine, we will need to revive supply chains, rebuild the economy, rebuild lives. Even after we emerge from the face-masked, socially distanced world, there will be nothing normal about the 'new normal'. There are no ready manuals

that we can use to guide us through the challenges that lie ahead. This will be largely an era of improvisation.

If we think about it, the new normal is the result not only of the pandemic, but of profound changes in the world in recent decades. What COVID-19 has done is to merely hasten the long overdue transformation of various aspects of our lives.

This is the age of uncertainty. We live in what is called a VUCA world. Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous. But VUCA is not a new term -- it has been used to describe the modern world under the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or FIRE. New technologies and high levels of connectivity are transforming the world at a level and pace we have never seen before. FIRE is changing the way we live, the way we produce, the way we think and learn, the way we relate to each other.

Having grown up in the age of FIRE, young people like you definitely see the world with new eyes, with new wirings in your brain. Your evolved brains can process more information at faster speeds. You can immediately tap multiple social networks to galvanize collective action, physically or virtually.

But to survive and thrive in the VUCA world and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, you need other skills such as informed decision making, creative problem solving, and perhaps above all, resilience, agility and adaptability.

To the extent possible, UP Diliman has tried to prepare you for the challenges you may face as you chart your own future. The interaction of disciplines in our university, along with the multiplicity of identities, belief systems, economic interests, and cultural traditions have provided a fertile ground for critical and innovative thinking as well as cross-cultural understanding.

Magtiwala kayong sa kabila ng COVID-19, tutulungan kayo ng edukasyong Tatak-UP upang maka-agapay sa mundong VUCA. Kaya, sa paglisan ninyo sa Unibersidad sa panahon ng kawalang-katiyakan, baunin ninyo ang malinaw na pananalig namin sa kakayanan ninyong maghanap ng lunas, maglingkod sa sambayanan na may dangal at husay, at mag-ambag tungo sa tunay at makatuturang pagbabagong panlipunan.

Muli, isang magandang umaga sa lahat at maligayang pagtatapos!