Valedictory Address

UP Manila College of Arts and Sciences Recognition Day (April 18, 2012)

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Honorable guest speaker Dr. Jaime Montoya, Chancellor Manuel Agulto, Officers of the University of the Philippines Manila, Officers of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dean Reynaldo Imperial, Faculty and staff, Guests, Parents, Fellow graduates, Friends, a pleasant morning to everyone.

At this point, it still feels surreal that I am here in this podium speaking in front of all of you. I just feel as if I'm in a dream and this is just part of the REM stage of my sleep. Oh well, I guess the happiness that I feel at this moment could perhaps be summarized by what Peeta Mallark said to Katniss Everdeen in the book Catching Fire… "I wish I could freeze this moment, right here, right now, and live in it forever."

Hindi ko po ikakaila na halong saya, kaba at takot ang namayani sa aking isipan nang malaman kong papasok ako ng UP: saya dahil UP ito eh, national university ng Pilipinas. Kaba at takot dahil sa aking naririnig na mga kwento ng aking mga kaibigan sa mga propesor ng UP na mala-powerpuff girls... paborito nila ang numerong tres. Mayroon din daw mga prof na idol ang mga Power Rangers... lima daw kasi ang power rangers kaya mahilig din sila magpaulan ng singko. Hindi nga nagkamali ang aking kaibigan, unang semestre pa lamang,

nabigyan na ako ng 2.25. Laking pasasalamat ko na lamang at hindi naman ako nabiktima ng mga fanatics ng power rangers at powerpuff girls.

Lumipas ang mga araw at napansin ko ang isang bagay na talaga namang katangi-tangi sa mga mag-aaral sa UP Manila lalo na kapag “katutubo” sa Kolehiyo ng Agham at Sining: ang ating fashion sense.

Bagamat hindi kaila sa akin na tayo lamang ang nag-iisang kolehiyo sa UP Manila na walang uniform, laking laglag ng aking panga nang makita ko ang mga tao sa CAS: literal palang maaring magdamit nang kahit ano, basta’t kaya mong dalhin ang sarili mo. Ang fashion sense na ito ay sobrang nakasanayan ko na kung kaya’t nang minsang mapunta ako sa isang institusyon upang magpasa ng resume ay muntik ko nang makalimutan ang ibig sabihin ng salitang “dress code” at kinailangan ko pang alalahanin at sabihin sa aking sarili na “oo nga pala... wala na ako sa UP, dapat iwasan na pala ang mga “beach attire”... dapat maging **kagalang-kagalang**.”

Payak lamang po ang aking mensahe sa umagang ito. Gusto ko pong bigyang-diin ang isa sa dalawang salita sa tema ng ating palatuntunan: **dangal** para sa sambayanan. Sa ingles, honor... integrity. Hindi ko na po masyadong bibigyang-diin ang “dunong” sapagkat naniniwala po ako na may tanging talino at potensyal na tayong lahat na naririto. Wala siguro tayo sa bulwagang ito kung hindi sa ating dunong at tiyaga na malagpasan at mapagtagumpayan ang mga pagsubok—yan man ay hirap ng exams o hamon ng oral presentations at

thesis—na inihapag sa atin ng ating mga batikang guro upang sukatin ang ating kahusayan. Kung kaya't sa umagang ito, ang higit na nais ko pong bigyang diin ay ang hamon kung **saan** at **papaano** natin gagamitin ang ating dunong at katalinuhan.

I would like to illustrate my point using a behavioral analysis of some political parties and individuals in the national and even in the university elections. Too often, we seek to change what is in our social system but the methods we use to change or transform the system resemble *exactly* those aspects we want changed in the system.

While some of those who seek position promote and promise for "change" and advertise themselves as "topnotch" leaders, their behavior prior to or long after being elected in their positions says otherwise. Sociological studies have shown that among Filipino government officials AND student leaders in many educational institutions, **including** the University of the Philippines, **corruption is very rampant**. Members of political parties whose dictum is the elimination of corruption are themselves engaging in graft and corruption.

Friends, after graduation let us remember that the phrase honor and excellence did not mean honor and excellence in **behaving unethically**. UP did not teach us to become power-hungry nor greedy animals, we were taught to uphold honor and integrity.

What then does it mean to uphold honor and integrity? Transitively, what does it mean to be a scholar of the nation? I myself am definitely puzzled as to how contextually define honor and integrity until I came across the second stanza of Rizal's mi ultimo adios which inspired the oblation.

“In barricades embattled, fighting with delirium,
others donate you their lives without doubts, without gloom;
The site doesn't matter, cypress, laurel or lily,
gibbet or open field, combat or cruel martyrdom,
are equal if demanded by country and home.”

I believe then that Honor and integrity means selflessly dedicating all that we do, wherever we are, for the betterment of our country. *The site doesn't matter, cypress, laurel or lily, gibbet or open field, combat or cruel martyrdom are equal if demanded by country and home.*

Like the katakataka leaves, the siempre vivo at the feet of the Oblation because a leaf or a piece of it thrown anywhere will sprout into a young plant, may it be that wherever we go, our “honorable” presence may promote growth, may promote life and may promote the proliferation not of spores of corruption and degenaracy, but seeds of truth and justice. Transitively thus, behaving with honor and integrity, being iskolars ng bayan means acting as catalysts rekindling and furthering the fire of deep-seated patriotism in the hearts of our countrymen through *relevant* social service, activism OR research.

Isa sa mga madalas na puna sa mga taga-UP ay ang taguring MAYABANG. The idea that we UP students are the “supreme” breed of students has been deeply ingrained and socialized to us. Statement shirts saying UP ako, ikaw? There are only two schools in the Philippines: UP and others, these statements perpetuate this “sovereign” view of ourselves. The connotation of honor often entails with it pride and sometimes, egotism, an inflated and fallatious sense of self-worth. It is time that we start to change our mindsets and embrace that concept of honor which is characterized by **humility** and **devoid** of **haughtiness** and **arrogance**. Ang matulin at mahangin kung matinik ay malalim. Bagamat hindi na tayo madalas na "casual" na magdamit, sana ay huwag nating kalimutang ilapat sa ating kilos at salita ang saplot ng **kababaang-loob... kabutihang asal ... at katapatan**.

According to Samuel Tilden, democratic candidate for US presidency: "Success is a ruthless competitor for it flatters and nourishes our weaknesses and lulls us into complacency. We bask in the sunshine of accomplishment and lose the spirit of humility which helps us visualize all the factors which have contributed to our success.” Bukod sa ating pagdadamit, isa pa siguro sa namumukod-tangi sa Kolehiyo ng Agham at Sining ang di-pagkakaroon nito ng polisiya na Return Service Agreement. Nakakalungkot mang isipin, ngunit tayo nga ang may pinakamaraming nagtatapos sa lahat ng kolehiyo sa Up Manila ngunit di katulad sa ibang kolehiyo, ay bibihira ang nagbabalik-loob at

nagbibigay-pasasalamat sa unang institusyon sa Pamantasan na luminang sa ating karunungan at kamalayan. Ilan kaya sa atin ang pipili ng daan tungo sa tunay na paglilingkod sa sambayanang nagpaaral sa ating mga Iskolar ng Bayan?

Huwag sana nating gawing pasubali ang di-pagkakaroon ng RSA sa ating mga kurso sa C-A-S upang pabayaan na lamang ang ating alma mater **lalo't-higit ang sambayanan**. Ayon nga sa isang kasabihan, ang di marunong tumingin sa pinanggalingan ay di makakarating sa paruruonan. Huwag nating kalimutan na tumanaw ng utang na loob sa mga kababayan nating nagpaaral sa atin. Isapuso natin ang misyon ng kolehiyo ng agham at sining.... "we should engage with relevant stakeholders in the production and deployment of cutting edge knowledge towards increased human capability and agency in teaching, research, community partnerships and advocacy". Sikapin natin na kahit ano pa man ang ating mga propesiyon sa hinaharap, sa ating mumunti **ngunit** may dignidad na paraan, ay makatulong tayo at magiging instrumento sa ganap at makatarungang pagbabagong panlipunan.

Lalo't higit, huwag nating hayaan na ang makinabang sa ating talino at husay ay ang mga mapang-aping elemento ng lipunan. Gamitin natin ang ating natutunan sa Pamantasan upang paunlarin ang bayan.

Sabi nga ng batikang mamamahayag na si Tom Brokaw, "You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to

the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world."

May the years of walking along the streets of Padre Faura, years of seeing our fellow Filipinos strive to make it from day-to-day by peddling or begging on the streets serve as our motivation to improve the social and political conditions of the Philippines. May we look forward to that day when we will no longer see peddlers and homeless people on the streets, not because they have already been ravaged by poverty, but because the Philippines has become a more humane and egalitarian society, providing for the needs of its citizens. Let us be the beacon of hope. Because in the midst of the defeaning cry for social change, we could either prolong the night or help in ushering the dawn. The better future of the Filipino people is now in our hands.

On behalf of the Seniors I now bequeath to the Juniors the noble task of continuing to uphold academic excellence and offering relevant social service to the Filipino people.

Mabuhay College of Arts and Sciences Batch 2012. Maraming Salamat po.