President’s Message to the Graduates of UP Diliman

My warmest congratulations to the 2015 Class of the University of the Philippines Diliman on your graduation from our country's only national university!

Moreover, I commend your teachers, trainers, UP staff and administrators led by your Chancellor, Dr. Michael L. Tan

I also congratulate your parents, guardians and loved ones for ceaselessly supporting you on your academic journey. This journey, while being rich and rewarding, is something that few begin - and even fewer finish. Back in 2011, many of you were among the 19.88% of the 65,110 examinees who passed the arduous but prestigious University of the Philippines College Admission Test (UPCAT).

The UPCAT is perhaps the most famous embodiment of the intellectual abilities, reasoning, analytical rigor and creativity that is required to attain a UP degree. By passing it, you proved yourself worthy to be counted among the country's finest young scholars.

This, however, was only the first test. Following this noteworthy achievement, you officially became students of UP Diliman - the largest and flagship campus in the University of the Philippines System.

This campus, with its 2192 faculty members, 27 degree-granting units, and 376 academic programs has been synonymous with 'excellence' since it relocated from war-torn Manila in 1949. Giving truth to the slogan, "shaping minds that shape the nation", UP Diliman has been training students like you to be the leaders, change-makers, critical thinkers and visionaries who have transformed Philippine society for the past six decades.

It is in this hallowed place, where you became initiated in this tradition of honor and excellence in service of the Filipino people. It is in UP Diliman, where you learned the intellectual, moral and social lessons that make good students excel and be the best in their discipline. With every sleepless night studying for exams, organizing
reports, planning projects or engaging in acts of public service; you also gained a clearer insight into what our people expect you to be—committed and true leaders who will facilitate and help them achieve better quality of lives in the 21st century.

The theme of your graduation, "Pag-uugat, Pag-uugnay, Pagyabong", mirrors your transformation from idealistic young freshmen to accomplished graduates before us today. You were nurtured by UP to have integrity so you can stand proud on where you are now—the best and the brightest in the country. Between these two phases, however, I would like to highlight the importance of forging links or pag-uugnay in this process of growth.

What distinguishes a true iskolar ng bayan is not the practice of excellence for its own sake. Rather, it is the application of excellence towards honorable ends, which has made our graduates admired the world over. And I believe it is pag-uugnay, or making connections, which underlies their honorable deeds.

As students of UP Diliman, we are taught, through a well-rounded education, how ideas, people, natural phenomena, and organizations naturally interconnect. This knowledge forms the heart of UP Diliman's long tradition of activism. Many of our graduates like you, have seen how each individual is connected to the whole—that the nation's issues are your issues. You have been witness to how one can, under the banner of truth, improve the world through strength of mind and will. And this is done through building networks, cooperation, and interconnections.

Our ideas and deeds can change lives and nations, such as the celebrated student and people's protests in the 1971 Diliman Commune and the 1986 EDSA revolution. Students, professionals, the masses and people from all walks of life came together to change a government. This knowledge of how ideas can become a potent source for social change also inspires UP's mandate of leadership in higher education and development under Republic Act No. 9500.

You, dear graduates, are inheritors of this grand tradition. As you prepare to face the world in characteristically excellent fashion, remember that honor always comes first. While showcasing the best of what your UP education has taught you, look back upon the connections you have made - with your family, friends, community and country - and know that to serve the people excellently is the highest honor for every graduate of the UP System's flagship university.

May the connections you create and foster over the next years, therefore, inspire you to pay it forward, both to UP and to the country. We live in a world where connections are built and severed at great speeds due to changes in concepts, movements and technology. Your character, which the university has lovingly shaped, shall serve as a beacon of strength and stability for our people in these times, through responsible leadership and stewardship.
To you, leaders of the new century, move forward to greatness by reaching out and making connections that truly matter. I enjoin you to align and connect your individual efforts with your alma mater, UP Diliman. While the mission is noble and daunting, your strength of character and willpower are greater in order to make UP and our country very proud.

*Mabuhay UP Diliman Batch 2015! Mabuhay ang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas!*

ALFREDO E. PASCUAL
President