

Commencement Address
Hon. Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz
Secretary
Department of Labor and Employment
35th Commencement Exercises
Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University
MID LA UNION CAMPUS
San Fernando City, La Union
3:00 P.M., Wednesday, 30 March 2016

A very memorable afternoon to all of you.

This graduation ceremony you are having today is a celebration of success worth remembering and thanking for, and I am honored and privileged to join you in your celebration and thanksgiving.

First, we offer our praises and thanks to the Almighty God whose lordship and sovereignty over all creation make every success possible.

Second, we give honors and respect to the ever-sacrificing parents, whose dream and wish is to give all their children a brighter future and the best in life that they could afford, something that they probably missed in their personal lives.

Third, we acknowledge with sincere commendation the hard work and patience of your University's ever-devoted teachers, educators, and staff who helped in molding you into who you are and what you have become today.

Fourth, we offer our salute of heartfelt congratulations to the members of the graduating classes. For a job well-done, you all deserve the diploma you will receive today. This is your "passport" to the first step in your chosen career and profession.

The Mid-La Union Campus of the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, your Alma Mater that has been your second home for the past four or five years, is a unique institution of learning.

I appreciate the fact that total human development with appropriate competencies is the philosophy that underpins your vision of a premiere and globally competitive university; your mission to provide relevant and quality instruction, research, and extension; and your goal to lead in transforming human resources into productive, self-reliant, and responsible citizens.

I note with pleasure, for example, that your Graduate School program in technology education enjoys a Level IV Qualified Status conferred by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines Inc. (AACUP), and that the CHED Evaluation of Graduate Education Programs (EGEP) has granted excellent ratings for both the Doctorate and Masters Program.

Your College of Law, being the first law school in La Union, has already produced top notch lawyers who are successful in their fields and contributing in their own ways to nation building. Your College of Engineering has consistently produced board passers and topnotchers and competitive graduates who, because your University has equipped them with theoretical and technical know-how, leadership skills, communication proficiency, and interpersonal and professional attributes that prepared them to be globally-competitive, are now employed in companies in the country and abroad.

On the other hand, your College of Information Technology, which is a CHED Center of Development for several years now, continually promotes innovation, a must in today's rapidly evolving IT era. At your College of Technical Education, students receive holistic education to become self-reliant and productive individuals, developing in them a strong culture of excellence and ethics.

For this year's graduates—over 800 candidates in all from the College of Graduate Studies; College of Law; College of Information Technology; and College of Technology—my understanding of that vision tells me that your University gives top priority in the teaching of positive values and attitude as very important part of the curriculum.

The departure from the traditional and the conventional in pursuit of your vision-mission is meant to remind students and graduates to live by the tenets of the University by exemplifying those values in your professional career and in your social and civic duties to the school, the community, and our country as a whole.

I am also glad that your vision and mission is very much aligned with the labor and employment policy of President Benigno S. Aquino III "to invest in our human resource" as the best asset of our country. The purpose, according to him, is to make our workers employable and competitive here in the Philippines and anywhere in the world and to put an end to the persistent problem of jobs-skills mismatch.

The strategy, under Executive Order No. 83, is to conduct industry-specific review of education and training curriculum, develop a coherent and internationally-benchmarked Philippine Qualifications Framework that is competency-based and labor market-driven, with an assessment-based qualification recognition system, done through strong partnership among government, the academe, and the industry.

The DepED, DOST, CHED, PRC, TESDA, and the DOLE now implement a convergent plan of action to carry out the President's instruction. Central to the convergent plan is the provision of timely, accurate, relevant, and accessible labor market information on industry-specific careers and courses, the use of LGU-based Public Employment Service Offices which we have expanded to include school-based PESOs, network of guidance counselors, conduct of National Career Congress and Career Guidance Week, and access to the government's electronic job portal, the enhanced Phil-Jobnet, at no cost to the employers, the jobseekers who are your graduates, and the schools for your guidance counseling and job placement services.

I take note that the DMMMSU balances the requirements of both the "hard" and "soft" skills that make it easier for employers to hire qualified workers. This balancing act combines one's responsibility and accountability to showcase our talents, gifts, skills, and competencies with the right character and values which are all God-given, to bring honor and praise not for ourselves, but for God and our country.

Unless our intellectual gifts are matched by timeless character and values that never change and that put God and country above ourselves, we will not see our nation and people prosper and gain the self-respect and dignity it deserves in the community of nations.

And the first lesson to learn, as it is also our way forward, is to be excellent Filipinos anywhere we are and whatever we do. Indeed, we live in a global world and Filipinos are global people. We are present in more than 200 countries around the globe, competing with citizens of nations of various races, culture, and temperament.

Here at home, Filipino-owned companies also face stiff competition against multinational firms that bring with them their own nationals as technicians and expatriates. Our workers face them in a highly-competitive business environment.

These are the realities of the global labor market that compel us to think global and do things the global way. That way is none other than "the way of excellence". It is the only way to compete and survive globally, whether you work here or abroad. It is one very important character trait—the so called "soft skill"—that a worker has to learn and possess if he or she has to be a "winner".

Excellence is something that should not scare you and me. It should not be a rare thing for any one of us to do. Excellence has been defined by one author to simply mean "doing a common thing in an uncommon way". Put it another way, "It is doing ordinary things in extraordinary way".

To excel is to recognize that your first competitor is yourself. The influence you exert among the people in your workplace can only equal the excellence you display in your work as you tap the reservoir of your hard skills or the technical competencies and the soft or employability skills that show your work ethics. We learn these skills from our parents in our homes, from our school teachers, from our parish priests and church pastors, and from the people in our community.

To be excellent is to treat every work as significant. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1964 Nobel Peace Prize Winner and famously known as Father of the American civil rights movement, has, for a reply to the query on what it is to be excellent, said: “No work is insignificant. If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, “Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well”.

In other words, Martin Luther King, Jr. is telling us that whatever our life’s work is, we should do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better.

It is not really the kind of job that you do that counts the most. It is how you do your job and how you treat others that provides the big difference. It is what makes you excel. Skills and competencies are very important, but equally so is your exemplary conduct and positive attitude towards work. This is what will make you a real champion in life. It is seen in one’s willingness to “go the extra mile,” “to exceed the quota, and give back more than what you receive”.

When Irwin Field was listed in Who’s Who in America and asked for a quotation to go with his biographical sketch, he wrote, “I have found out that if you give the public more than their money’s worth while maintaining a high standard of quality, they will respond fully with their support. I have always insisted on giving the paying public more than they expect.”

Being excellent is also being creative and innovative and not losing enthusiasm about your work to avoid the perennial problem of monotony and boredom. It helps you discover your hidden talents and potentials. By giving the best of yourself to your job, you also earn self-respect and self-worth, which adds dignity and honor to your person and your job.

“Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it,” according to one author. Surely, you do not want to be identified with work that is mediocre and half-done, but with something that is excellent and which you can be proud of.

One noticeable mark of an excellent worker is how he makes his time productive and profitable. J. Willard Marriott, founder of the Marriott Corporation and owner of the Marriott chain of hotels, is known to work not eight, or ten, or twelve, but eighteen hours a day for many years. "No person can get very far in this life on a forty-hour week," he had said.

Going beyond the normal working hours, when there is work that has yet to be done, is a noticeable mark of a person who has developed passion for excellence. He learns to value time just as he values life. Benjamin Franklin once said: "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

Someone also said: "Waste your money and you're only out of money, but waste your time and you've lost part of your life". And Henry Ford had said this: "It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste." This is how excellent people value time and stay ahead of the rest.

Another important lesson to learn is to remember that education is a life-long process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Completing your course and receiving your diploma is not the end of learning. The person who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after. You must, therefore, enroll yourselves in a lifetime self-improvement program to continuously add to your knowledge, to hone your skills, and to build on the values and character that you want to be reflected in your own job. In this time and age of information technology, you must remember that knowledge is power. It is influence. It is money. And that is why knowledge is worth everything it may cost you to obtain it.

A story was told that in a business class at the University of Wisconsin, USA, the students had to interview a number of local people and write a report. One student thought the assignment was a waste of time until he spoke with a 78-year old farmer whom he asked: "How much education do you have?" The farmer answered, "Six years of schooling and seventy-two years of learning."

Will Durant had said: "Sixty years ago, I knew everything; now I know nothing. Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance." How true! Education is an unlearning and relearning process: We discard what is rendered obsolete and acquire new ways of thinking and doing.

Dear Graduates, there is, indeed, no end to education for as long as you are willing to learn.

The third lesson is to remember that, as first time jobseekers, it is practical to accept the first available job and get the needed experience. Experience is a "must" to your employability and marketability. What you need after graduation is work experience

and a good employer who is willing to give you the chance to apply what you learn. You are all familiar with the saying that experience is the best teacher, meaning, what you learn inside the classroom has to be tested in the best school of experience. The Farmer's Almanac says "experience does all her teaching backwards; she gives a test before explaining the lesson."

Even in my present work as Secretary of Labor and Employment, I advise job seekers that after graduation, they should not be very choosy and should look first for jobs in the domestic labor market, not abroad. Don't be duped by illegal recruiters who will offer you jobs abroad because you need to have at least two years of work experience to land a good and decent position overseas.

The objective in looking for a job here at home is not merely to earn a living, but to gain experience. Pay is only secondary. It is the work experience as a "first timer" that will give you later the valuable passport to better jobs with better pay.

I am heartened to know that the Filipino worker's mindset is slowly changing. Last Monday in Manila, the DOLE and one of its partners, JobStreet.com, bared the results of an online survey showing that 3 out of 4 Filipinos prefer to work in their hometowns rather than in other places. This is a good indication that many Filipinos still want to work here than elsewhere.

At this point, you may be asking: "What are the jobs waiting for me and where can I find them?"

I want to assure you that there are plenty of job vacancies here. The enhanced Phil-Jobnet, the government's online job search and job-skill matching portal contain at any given time no less than 200,000 vacancies logged by employers themselves.

These include jobs that could be in demand for the next 10 years based on the DOLE's Human Resource Development Roadmap, 2016-2022 and the labor market study, Project JobsFit : DOLE 2020, that identifies the following industries as key employment generators—agribusiness, cyber-services, health and wellness, hotel and restaurant, tourism, mining, construction, banking and finance, manufacturing, ownership dwelling and real estate, transport and logistics, and wholesale and retail trade, including four emerging industries—creative industries, diversified/strategic farming and fishing, power and utilities, and renewable energy.

The graduates of the College of Law, for example, if they are not going straight to review for the bar examination, but instead look for a job could consider the following positions posted in the e-PhilJobNet for which they may qualify: Legal Compliance Officer; Supply Chain Manager; Legal Clerk; Legal Secretary; Associate Lawyer; Legal Manager; Corporate Lawyer; Junior Associate Lawyer; Paralegal; Legal and

Recovery Officers and Assistants; Litigation Lawyer; Tax Manager; Legal Counsel; HR Manager; Investor Relations Officer; Intellectual Property Specialist; Risk and Fraud Analyst; Contract Specialist; Auditor; and Operations Manager.

For those in IT, they may apply for any of the following: Web Developer; Software Engineer; Java Developer; Technical Support Representatives for Gaming Accounts; Enterprise Applications Developer; IT Manager; Information Systems Analyst; Technical Support Specialists/Associates; Anti-Piracy Assistant; Knowledge and Process Management Analyst; Application Developer; Network Administrators; Computer Operator/Hardware Specialist; and Data Entry Associate/Software Specialist.

Other related vacancies with high demand, especially for education graduates, are Learning Administration Associate; Training and Quality Specialists; IELTS Facilitator; Online English Teacher; Learning and Organizational Development Manager; Training Coordinator/Training Specialist; Librarian; Educational Content Editors; Product Trainer; Communication Coach; Process Trainer; Editor/Proofreader; Guidance Counselor/Associate; Learning and Development Specialist; Multimedia Specialist; and Customer Service Associates for Business Process Outsourcing Companies.

Globally, the 2015 Global Talent Shortage Survey of the Manpower Group shows that the top 10 jobs employers are having difficulty filling up are skilled trade workers, sales representative, engineers, technicians, drivers, management executives, accounting and finance staff; secretaries, personal assistants, administrative assistants, and office support staff; IT staff; and production/machine operators. These are the same in-demand jobs locally in the labor market.

Sadly, many of the local vacancies and foreign job orders remain unfilled for months and we have to delete them from the active list despite many jobseekers who apply online and for some reasons.

In a survey conducted by the DOLE's Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, employers identified several reasons to explain their difficulties in hiring employees. I will mention just the top three reasons. One, shortage of applicants with the right competencies. If you are in this situation, and short training is a cure, do not hesitate to apply at the TESDA Regional Offices for a slot in its Training for Work Scholarship Program. After the training, get yourself assessed and be certified for the specific trade or occupation you applied for.

Second, applicants' expectation of high salary. This is the very reason why I gave you the practical advice to accept the first job offered to you.

Third, applicants lack work experience. This is another gap in our education and training curriculum where industry or company-based training remains inadequate.

From the 2015 Global Talent Shortage Survey, we become aware of two important qualifications that any jobseeker must possess—technical, or hard skills, and employability, or soft skills.

The lack of available applicants is the most common reason employers gave to explain why they face difficulty filling jobs in 2015. More than one in three, or 35 percent, said this is an issue, up from 31% in 2014. The employers also cited lack of candidates with required technical competencies, with 34 percent saying this was a reason why they can't fill jobs. The technical competencies employers are seeking include candidates who have industry-specific professional qualifications (16%) and those with industry-specific skilled trades certifications (13%).

More than one in five hiring managers (22%) say that lack of experience is behind talent shortages and 17% report a lack of workplace competencies. The most frequent soft skills deficits are lack of professionalism (6%) and lack of enthusiasm, motivation and a learning mindset (6%).

A further reason 13% of employers said is candidates with salary expectations that exceed what is offered. In addition, 5% say that candidates don't want to work in the location where there are vacancies and 5% are struggling to fill jobs because the company, business sector or occupation has a poor image.

This is what the DOLE's newest full-cycle employment facilitation program, JobStart, seeks to address. Pilot-tested in four local government units in Luzon, with funding support from the Government of Canada and technical assistance by the Asian Development Bank, JobStart is the only program that I knew that the DOLE has rolled out even because of the positive feedback from both the employers and youth beneficiaries during its mid-term review. JobStart is a career coaching and skills training program intended to help young people jumpstart their careers by creating opportunities to improve their technical skills and develop the life skills necessary for success in today's competitive workplace through partnerships with employers.

The program's full-cycle employment facilitation service is a systematic approach in assisting young jobseekers from planning their career paths all the way through acquiring the best-fit jobs. Under JobStart, a participant is assessed for his or her job readiness as a first step, and then provided with a 10-day intensive life skills training designed to holistically hone his or her attitude and behavioral skills and transform him or her into a person well-prepared to face the challenges of the world of work.

The completion of career guidance and life skills training enables the participant to be job-matched with a partner employer for the technical training of up to three months and application of learning through internship program for another three months in a workplace environment. The aim is to shorten the participant's school-to-work transition, which we have already achieved.

For those of you who will land their first job sooner than they expect, remember that as you progress in your career, it is good to know this early that there is hardly such thing as lifetime employment nowadays. Workers move from one job to another because they are multi-skilled and can have multiple careers and multiple employers.

Possession of skills is still the best form of employment security and protection. It can shield workers from unemployment brought about by sudden shocks, like natural and man-made calamities, disasters and emergencies, simply because they can easily adjust and move faster from one job to another.

While career decisions are personal decisions, I would still advise that you value your job with a balanced perspective. There are those who would value more the work with the immediate gratification that money can give and forget the more important principles and character that make a person who he is and what he becomes.

One author says very aptly, "The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets from it, but what he becomes by it". John Henry Jowett says "the real measure of our wealth is how much we'd be worth if we lost all our money."

The fourth, and final, lesson—and to me the most important—that you can take home today is to remember that work is a gift from God to His children.

It is intended to serve the good of others, the community, and our nation. Many times, I wonder why people have to say: "Thank God, it's Friday." Could it be that work to them is more of a burden and not a gift that brings enjoyment, satisfaction, and fulfillment in life?

But the truth is, God is the model worker and He gives work as a gift. As the giver, God is also our true employer. We work to praise God and not to please men. When we serve others, we serve wholeheartedly as if we are serving God, not men. That is why we, who profess to know God, are expected to be excellent workers in the chosen field where God has called us to be.

Filipinos, as a Christian nation and people, are called to excel and our highest standard of excellence is God. Whether we are working here in our country or abroad, and whether we are sweeping streets, or washing dishes, or managing a multi-million-peso business, we always give the best of ourselves to our job because no work is insignificant to God. It is His gift to us. We should enjoy it, cherish it, and excel in doing it. We offer our work and labor back to God as our spiritual act of worship, holy and pleasing to Him.

These are principles and lessons that I learned from the famous university where all of us go to, the University of Life. They help me grow and mature in my inner person. They inspire and enable me to strive continuously to be the kind of person God wants me to be.

I am certain that at the DMMMSU, the right foundation for life-long education has been laid down in your minds and in your hearts, the way John Harvard, whose bequests endowed Harvard University, understood it when he said: "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all knowledge and learning."

On this note, I extend once again my heartfelt congratulations to the graduates, to their parents, and to officials of the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid-La Union Campus for a job well done.

Thank you and God bless you all.

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