



Commencement Address

Secretary ROSALINDA DIMAPILIS-BALDOZ

Calamba Doctors' College
3:00 P.M., Friday, 27 March 2015
Circulo Paseo de Uno de Calamba
Brgy. Paciano, Calamba City

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

CALAMBA DOCTORS' COLLEGE

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Members of the Faculty and Non-Academic Personnel;
Guests, visitors, and friends of the College;
Parents; my dear graduates:

A pleasant afternoon to all of you.

I am delighted to accept your invitation to deliver a message at your 10th Commencement Exercises today, and I extend my sincere appreciation to the Board of Trustees of this College for the invitation.

I was—am—challenged by your commencement theme, “Labor that Enriches the World is the Most Precious Gift to Mankind”, and it was curiosity to find out what this theme means to you, as well as my serious desire to share what I have learned and experienced that had led me to this very important occasion.

A journey, we say, begins with a single step.

So let me begin this afternoon’s journey by saying first a little something about your College: I believe you have served the truth. Veritas et Servum. That’s your noble purpose. Ten years ago, you started with only two courses—Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Graduate of Midwifery. In 2006, your college attained a 100 percent passing rate in the Nursing Licensure Examination and a 58 percent passing rate in the Licensure Examination for Midwives. That spoke volumes about you, so much so that today you offer five courses—actually, five doors—to your students’ dreams and their future.

My task today is to offer some unalterable truths about labor and employment in relation to your theme. These truths, some of them painful, should not diminish the great joy that the occasion brings to the parents and the graduates, as well as to the school, but should make this commencement exercises more meaningful and memorable.

I am aware that I stand on hollowed grounds. Calamba City was home of the national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, whose life was singularly devoted to the education of all Filipinos.

He had, in his lifetime, extolled the virtues of the Filipino youth as the hope of the Motherland, and for this reason, your commencement exercises assumes great importance and unique significance. This is one of the truths that I hope will sink deep in your hearts this afternoon.

Another truth. When you leave this College tomorrow, you will be ushered into a world vastly different from the world you have lived, been taught, nurtured, and prepared. Don't be surprised. The world outside thrives on a set of values and traditions that are subsumed in a culture called competition. This world was summed up by Tevye, the principal character in the celebrated musical, "The Fiddler on the Roof", when he said: "It's a changed world." My question is: "Are you prepared for this world of perpetual and constant change?"

Let's look at this preparation phase first. When you entered this college to become nurses, midwives, educators, radiologic technicians, and business managers, I am sure your teachers taught you the rudiments of your chosen professions. I am sure they immersed you in a mountain of knowledge about your courses. This is good. Having the basic foundation endowed you with a platform on which additional learning can be piled up and accumulated later.

Of course, you did not enter the College with nothing. From your home and families, you brought with you in this institution a set of values and traditions that your parents and your community have inculcated in you as children. Values such as pagiging maka-Diyos, magalang, masipag, matiyaga, matulungin, matapat, and other traits were the basic upbringing you brought to the College. I hope you have not forgotten these values, even if, during your stay in school, another layer of socio-cultural values was added, including integrity, sense of community and nationhood, patriotism, the value of responsibility and discipline, and self-esteem.

All these imbue each one of you with the immense value of a human resource, which President Benigno S. Aquino III, in his 22-point Labor and Employment Agenda, said is our country's top human resource, and thus mandated us at the DOLE to invest in to make you more competitive and employable. Before us, then, at the DOLE, it was your parents, then your school and community that have invested in you. Let us, therefore, give our highest praise and commendation to them this afternoon.

Some of you may have begun the journey outside of the school earlier than others in your class by already looking for something meaningful and rewarding to use what you learned in your chosen profession, like employment or entrepreneurship, to achieve your full potential. The others could just be raring to start tomorrow.

Be that as it may, it might be profitable and helpful if you listen to my advice. As professionals, your access to employment opportunities in the labor market all depends on you—in your career plans, in your skills and competencies, even in your personal mission. It also depends very greatly in your attitude and behaviour towards work. Very little will be the influence of exogenous factors in your success or failure, such as which

school did you go to or whom do you know. I tell you, such factors the modern labor market no longer recognise. Don't even worry about whether there will be available jobs in the market for you. The labor market will take care of that later. First things first. And this first is yourself.

Why is this so? John Maxwell, the leadership guru, wrote that "our attitude may not be the asset that makes us great leaders, but without good ones we will never reach our full potential."

Maxwell cited the study of Robert Half International, a consulting firm, who had asked the vice presidents and personnel directors at 100 of America's largest companies to name the single greatest reason for firing an employee.

Of the seven answers to the question, five were all attitude problems: (1) inability to get along with other workers, 17 percent; (2) dishonesty or lying, 12 percent; (3) negative attitude, 10 percent; (4) lack of motivation, 7 percent; and (5) failure or refusal to follow instructions, 7 percent. Although the top reason was incompetence at 30 percent, the 70 percent are all attitudinal.

Here's another one. The Carnegie Institute had analysed the records of 10,000 persons and concluded that 15 percent of success is technical training; the other 85 percent is due to personality, and the primary personality trait identified was attitude.

In the 2009-2010 Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) Integrated Survey on why employers experience difficulties in recruitment, four of seven reasons could be attributed to a job seeker's attitude: (1) applicant's expectation of high salary, 19.5 percent; (2) absence of job applicant, 7.3 percent; (3) work schedule problems, 4.5 percent; and preference to work abroad, 2.9 percent. Again, though the top reason is shortage of applicants with the right competencies, a good percentage relates to attitude problem.

A recent study of the Asian Development Bank points out that job search behaviour of young Filipinos is one of the major factors that influence the pattern and speed of school-to-work transition, the average length in months or years for them to find their first jobs. The responses to the surveys I earlier mentioned confirm what the ADB study refers to as 'job search behaviour'.

In sum, when asked the question: "What do employers in the labor market look for their prospective workers?", the answers could be, firstly, employers expect their prospective workers to be industrious, systematic, time-conscious, innovative, and values-driven. We at the DOLE call it ISTIV. Employers expect their prospective workers to be competent, and to live a culture of personal honesty, integrity, and loyalty to the organization. They expect to see in you basic technical competencies required of the job and non-technical or life skills that everyone needs to excel at work.

What are these? A worker in the modern workplace should be able to receive, respond, and act on verbal and written communication; work with others; demonstrate work values;

practice basic housekeeping procedures; work in a team environment; and practice career professionalism. They even look after your ability to promote environmental protection, and to develop and practice negotiating skills. They look if your are creative, too. These are just a few of what we call “soft” skills, or life skills.

The technical skills, or “hard skills”, to perform tasks in their chosen field, follows: problem-solving skills, ability to learn and use technology; ability to collect, analyse, and organise data and information; numeracy or ability to use mathematical concepts and techniques; and plan and organise work.

If you possess most, or all, of these, you are job-ready. These will be your guideposts to a successful career. When you look for a job, employers will look for these skills which are important for increasing productivity, viability, and growth of their enterprises.

Now let me bring you to a brief tour of the local labor market so you will know what to expect. We have around 37.455 million employed and about 2.635 million unemployed Filipinos as of January 2015. Of the unemployed, 47 percent, or 1.246 million are unemployed young people, aged 15-24 years old.

The good news is that this number of young, unemployed Filipinos is going down, as is the national level of unemployment. Another good news is that, according to the ADB, 42 percent of the Filipino youth between ages 20 to 24 have some college years or education, compared to 33 percent in 1991. In fact, our labor force is increasingly educated compared to other middle-income economies. 53 percent of our labor force have graduated from high school or higher, compared with 30 percent in Thailand, and 26 percent in Indonesia.

What do these numbers tell us?

According to the ADB, the relatively high levels of youth education in the Philippines influence the kind of jobs that young people, like you, demand, and also the kind of investments that are poured into the country.

On the part of the DOLE, we have, in partnership with industry, identified 13 industries as key employment generators, or KEGs. These KEGS have the potential to generate employment and absorb the bulk of the workforce in the years to come. These are agribusiness, banking and finance, construction, education, health and wellness, hotel restaurant and tourism, information technology-business process management, mining, manufacturing, power and utilities, ownership, dwellings and real estate, transport and logistics and wholesale and retail trade.

For you who are graduates in the health and allied professions, the World Health Organization indicates that a significant proportion of the country’s domestic health and wellness market remains untapped, particularly among the low-income households. Hence, health programs and services that will allow the poor more access to healthcare should considerably boost the industry’s growth. The potential of the medical tourism industry should also be developed as increased demand for healthcare services for foreign

visitors can also generate decent employment opportunities for our health professionals right here in our country, instead of abroad, where our health professionals tend to follow their career paths.

Right off, nurses are in-demand; so are herbologists; opticians; optometrists; spa/massage therapists; therapeutic masseurs; healthcare service workers; midwives; dentists; surgeons; aestheticians; pharmacy aides; x-ray technologists; respiratory therapists; geriatric medicine; and dieticians. On the hard-to-fill side are doctors, physical therapists, pharmacists, medical technologists, laboratory technicians, cosmetic surgeons, cosmetic dentists, biochemical engineers, RAD technologists, nutritionist, and clinical instructors.

We already have the K-12, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act, which responds to the demand for quality education, improved educational system, and enhanced learning infrastructure. This aligns our basic education with the rest of the world's, and put us at par with global standards. In response to the 2015 ASEAN Economic Integration, we have already adopted eight Mutual Recognition Agreements of which seven are regulated professions—engineering, architecture, surveying, accountancy, nursing, dentistry, and medical services, and one of the professionals and skilled workers in the tourism industry. We have developed the Philippine Qualifications Framework, or PQF, to set the education standard and skills development process attuned with the labor mobility framework of the ASEAN Qualifications Framework. The PQF is a national policy that describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets the standards for qualifications outcomes.

Now to provide you a window, or more appropriately, to show you the door on how to start your job search in earnest, you have to learn that it is easier today to find your dream job because the means of access to all these opportunities in the local labor market that I have laid before you, is varied as it is plenty. You need to have a good grasp of labor market information as well as to master effective strategies on job searches.

To this end, we have established a strong Labor Market Information System that links all information and online databases of the government. Firstly, we have enhanced the PhilJobNet, the government's official job portal, which is now accessible through your mobile and smart phones. The mobile app can be downloaded using Android and IOS compatible phones. It is also available free in Google Play Store. You can search jobs and download our LMI publications using this app. If you visit <http://www.phil-job.net>, you can view and search for the recent job vacancies posted by employers; register for free and avail of free services; and advertise yourself as a skilled professional.

Your generation is now known as “millennials”. You are “millennials” because you are career-minded young people who grew up in an age of high-performance computers, smartphones, and tablets, and whose first pre-occupancy the moment you wake up in the morning is whether you have an Internet connection. You inhabit a social media environment. You are innovative and creative and will always find solution to every problem. Because you are “millennials”, you must now be familiar with private online job sources, which are plenty. In fact, we have signed up partnership agreements with six

of them to widen your access. Please use these online job sources, such as Career Hub, JobStreet, JobsDB, and Hallo Hallo Job, which are all linked to PhilJobNet.

I also urge you to join a million Filipinos and over 650,000 other foreign nationals who had browsed our enhanced technology-based and comprehensive labor and management education services, or LEES, a new approach to deliver information about the world of work which makes use of integrated modules of instruction and information materials, such as audio-visual learning aids showcasing DOLE's programs and services to reach out to a broader audience. There are now 49 short LEES video clips, in anime, on job search; entrepreneurship; workers' organization; labor standards; the Labor Law Compliance System (LLCS); DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP); child labor-free programs; employees compensation; Single-Entry Approach (SEnA); Labor Management Cooperation (LMC); Productivity Improvement; Productivity Olympics; Occupational Safety and Health (OSH); overseas employment; practice of profession; and skills training.

Abroad, I need to tell you that international employers are as much selective and sophisticated. If your career paths are inclined to lead towards that direction, well, you need to have a modicum of real job experience first, say, two years at the minimum. Let me also tell you that the Philippines, as a major country of origin of professionals and skilled workers, has the advantage of having Filipinos known the world over for being hardworking, committed, competent, language proficient, and jolly.

We Filipinos are as much local as we are global. We carry on our shoulders the need to sustain our reputation in language proficiency, strong work ethics, strong technical skills, and our flexibility.

But your generation, like the one before you, is going to face a long-standing problem engendered by international migration: movement restriction. Even if millions of Filipinos are leaving for abroad every year, data shows that migration is steady, not increasing, at a global rate of only 3 percent. Here in Asia, the proportion is merely 1.5 percent of the population. So you have to consider very hard this real possibility: not all of you who are graduating today will be able to make your niche overseas even if you dream of it.

This is not, of course, a cause to despair. Come December 2015 when the ASEAN Economic Community comes into being, there is an expected free flow of goods, capital, services, and skilled workers among the ten economies of the ASEAN. In six of these ten countries—Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam—the International Labor Organisation estimates that 14 million jobs will be created, 3.1 million of whom will come from our country. But there is a warning. Many of the jobs will be in the vulnerable skills. The ILO also noted that opportunities will not be evenly distributed between countries, economic sectors, gender, and skills. You have to watch out for these developments because aside from greater connectivity, economic and employment growth will be driven by other forces, such as ageing populations in developed countries; talent shortages; and increasing pressure for movement of workers from less-developed, but labor-rich, countries to higher-income, but self-deficient, economies.

For example, the 2013 survey results of the Manpower Group showed that the difficulty in hiring workers with job-ready qualifications is most felt in Japan, Hong Kong, and India, which have reported acute degrees of shortages in such occupations as sales representatives, engineers, technicians, management executives, accounting and finance, information technology, skilled trade workers, sales managers, laborers, and specialists in the field of research and development.

This is why I need to tell you this afternoon that as graduates, you are a boost to our longer-term economic growth. Don't believe the pessimists among us who will tell you that after graduation, you will only add to the ranks of the unemployed. You are young and you will contribute to the country's so-called 'youth dividend'.

As I speak, the Philippines is already reaping the fruits of the government's strategic investments in human resource development, started in 2010 after the Aquino III administration assumed public office. Take note that in that year, our budget for education and manpower development was set at P235.2 billion. In 2014, it was P389.6 billion. This year, we have a budget of P410.2 billion.

We had invested huge financial resources in health to access universal access to healthcare. Our conditional cash transfer program now covers six million households to ensure social protection for the poor and the vulnerable. Altogether, social services get the biggest share in the government budget compared to defense and military spending and debt servicing during the past administration.

The fruits of these investments are you, our graduates, in terms of your employability as workers with skills set that meet industry needs—job-ready—and readily-absorbable by the labor market.

If after tomorrow, you join the labor market and take only between six months to nine months to find your first regular job, thereby contributing to our sustained economic growth, then all the programs of the government to address the job-skills gap; all its investments to develop world-class productive workers, will have been worth every cent.

Because of you, the Philippines is now hitting the so-called demographic "sweet spot", as projected by the population projections of the United Nations, which said that countries with strategic investments in their human resources; young population; and education system that produces skills set needed by industries, will reap the demographic dividend of sustained annual economic growth rates averaging 7.3 percent in the next ten years, and this "sweet spot" is said to last approximately 35 years.

The Philippines today is no longer the sick man of Asia. In many global indices of economic health, we are excelling, and surpassing our best expectations. The World Bank has dubbed the Philippines as the "rising tiger of Asia", while the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales has adjudged the country as one of "the brightest sparks in the ASEAN region". Just a few weeks ago, we registered an 8.5 points improvement in

labor freedom, one of the 10 economic freedoms yearly measured in countries around the world by the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal through their Economic Freedom Index.

We have earned investment upgrade status from three major credit rating agencies—Standard & Poor's, Fitch, and Moody's, which now view our country as credit-worthy. Our global rankings have improved in many of the economic and business indicators. In the 2015 Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) of the World Economic Forum, we have sustained our tremendous progress in improving our global competitiveness, particularly in labor market efficiency, one of the 12 pillars of the GCI. In tackling corruption, the country was rated “less corrupt” by Transparency International in its 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. We ranked 85th of 174 countries covered, ahead of Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam in the ASEAN.

This is, therefore, an opportunity you should not miss. You will step onto the world of work much prouder as a Filipino than in the past. But here lies the challenge that you should be ready to face. Equip yourself with the right skills set and be job-ready.

A few years ago, I spoke at a similar commencement ceremony in my Alma Mater, the Manuel L. Quezon University, where I shared four practical and inspiring life lessons that I learned and which helped me reach this point in my career as public servant.

Since these are personal lessons, you may want to hear and distill them because I feel these are applicable to “starters” in life like you.

Be the excellent worker that you are. Excellence is doing ordinary things in extra-ordinary ways. To excel is to recognise that your first and number one competitor is none other than yourself. Captain Nathan Algren of the movie, “The Last Samurai”, said: “They are an extraordinary people. From the moment they wake, they devote themselves to the perfection of whatever they pursue.” So, know who you really are; what you are good at; and what is your real purpose in life. To excel is to have the will and determination to win not only in the workplace, but to be a champion in life.

Always remember that education is a life-long process of learning, unlearning, and re-learning. Completing your course and receiving your diploma today is not the end of it. The person who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after. Continue to add knowledge, hone your skills, and build on the values and character that you want to be reflected into your own. There is no end to education for as long as you are willing to learn.

Be practical. Accept the first available job and get the needed experience. In addition to your diploma, gaining experience is a “must” to your employability and marketability. Do not be choosy when you apply for your first job, as long as that is within your ability and your field of study.

Finally, and the most important, remember that work is a gift from God to His children. Your work, whatever it will be, is intended to serve the good of others, the good of the community and, most of all, the good of our nation and country. If education is a public value, as one newspaper columnist said it is, then work is a public good.

God is the model worker, and he gives work as a gift. As the giver, God is 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 the right perspective and the right priority to follow and observe. It is looking at work from its spiritual dimension. 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 excellence 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, or working as a clerk or head of a government agency, we always give the best of ourselves to our job because no work is insignificant to God. It is His gift that we should enjoy. We should cherish it. We should excel in doing it. We offer our work and labor back to God as our spiritual act of worship—holy and pleasing to Him. We, Filipinos as a race should be known by the excellent work that we do as the best way of honouring our God and our country, our Motherland.

These are the principles and lessons that I learned and have inspired me in my daily life. They help me grow and mature in my inner person and enable me to strive continuously to be the kind of person God wants me to be.

Dear Graduates of the Calamba Doctors' College: I am certain that your mentors in this academic institution have laid down in your hearts and minds the right foundation for life-long education, in the manner that John Harvard, whose bequests endowed Harvard University, understood it when he said in 1963: "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 congratulate all of you in this memorable day. God bless.





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