



*Prof. Rufino Ignacio  
Former Dean, MSU College of Engineering  
Former Vice President, MSU*

### **Graduation is Celebration!**

President Dr. Camar Umpa; Honorable Members of the Board of Regents; Our Respected Public Officials; Hardworking Officers of the MSU Administration, Faculty and Staff; Honored Guests; Loving Parents; Our Gallant Honorees -- members of the 2004 Graduating Class of the Mindanao State University; Ladies and Gentlemen:

### **Great is Allah and great is His mercy. Assalam Mulaikum.**

What a small world we live in? Two days ago, I was in my office in Washington rushing my activities to be with you today. I am still jet-lagged as you will notice, my knees are wobbly because of the 17 hour flight, but I don't care. What I know is I am home. MSU is my home sweet home. And that's good enough for me. I can even doze off here right on stage. And you will forgive me because I am a native going back to his clan. During my speech, I will either sleep ahead, or you will. That's okay, too, providing you don't snore too loud to disturb your colleagues.

Now, what do you want to hear from me? Is it the usual charge, and for me to say ... go forth, Graduates, face the world, carry the torch, change the universe the best way MSU prepared you to do? That's the cliché that I know nobody will take up anyway, at least in the first few years while you try to get an entry level job, and fight to keep that job for the necessary three meals a day. Therefore, I will not give you that charge for now. Maybe later.

Or, would you like to hear a thesis on the Blessing and Scourge of Globalization; or Science and Technology and Its Impact on Development, an expertise of Dr. Camar; or Diversity and Peace in this World? If I talk about any of the topics, we'll be here for two hours, at least. We don't want that.

Instead, why don't we just tell stories? Or recite poems? Or, play games? Is that okay with you? Yeahhh...

But, first, let me address the question in your mind. What is this fellow who has just arrived from America going to tell us? What is bad about America? How nice it is to be there? Or is he going to advise us to stay put in the Philippines and make this country great again, while he enjoys his apples and oranges in Seattle? Oops, not too fast.

Let me explain. It is a fact that in our lifetime, we change jobs eight times on the average. In all probability, you are going to be part of the workforce for the next 40 years. Forty years, wow, that is a lifetime! Remember how boring it is to sit in a class for 40 minutes? And now 40 years!

Ughh.. On my own, I've already changed jobs 14 times. I am beyond the mark. Let me tell you, however, that I have enjoyed myself immensely in the last 41 years since graduating from the University of the Philippines. It was not work I did because I had fun, and I am still having fun, right now with you.

My present sojourn in America, as I look at it, is part of a journey, a transient pause in the continuum called My Life. Who knows, I might still end my career in this great University where I began in 1963. That is a real possibility because I find a new challenge here that sparks my spirit. Where I am challenged, that is where I go. I was challenged by engineering and technology, physics, by teaching, basketball as amateur sports and profession, the restaurant business, manufacturing, export-import marketing, construction, aquaculture, forestry, stage production, acting, prose and poetry, book writing, community service, politics, love and family, etc. etc...and I tried them all. I made some mistakes, at one time losing my house and lot in a venture, but I succeeded in most. Looking back it was all a joy ride. No, it was not work, it was play. I strongly advise you to that life style. Start with a vision and beget many more. Make them big as you move along. Focus, scatter, juggle, splurge, do them all, get crazy, and most of all, enjoy every minute of your adventures.

So what do I see as an emerging challenge for me at MSU? I want to harness the potentials of the thousands of alumni, some 22,000 from the main campus alone. I want to convince them to give back to the Alma Mater a little something of what they earn because of their MSU education. With this in perspective, we established the Love Mindanao and MSU Foundation based in Manila that is actively pursuing an initial endowment fund of ten (10) million pesos for the University. We set up the MSU Electronic Village in the United States for information-exchange of alumni around the world. The Electronic Village will host the 5th international alumni reunion at Disneyland, California in June this year. Let me know if you wish to join the reunion. Perchance, I also would like to teach here, again, and re-live the wonderful days of my youth interacting with the best minds ever, barring none, in the Philippines and abroad. If President Umpa will allow me, I would like to do this gratis et amore, walang bayad, libre, say after two more years in America. All I ask for as compensation is the appetizing food in the cafeteria and a nice cozy space in the dormitory.

Believe me, dear Graduates, once an MSUan, always an MSUan. The University, with her melodious kulintang and kubing, beckons alumni around the globe, -- in their homes, in their work and in their reveries. The University was great for them. They had a swell time in her classrooms, in the dormitories, in the gym, in the golf course, in every nook and corner of this God's little acre.

The high quality of education you earned here is an accepted given. You are the envy of other students in the region because of this quality. And for most of you, please admit it, -- you fell in love here for the first time in your life. That romance will linger forever. With handsome collegians and beautiful coeds, a bonus is the enchanting and legendary campus that you could never, ever leave. It will always be dreamlike for you whose life and heart have been woven into

its tapestry -- the thick fog, the biting cold, the diversity of students, and the normal misbehaviors you did while here. While the morning hugs warmly, the afternoon is enveloped in mist with its amazing ethereal quality. It is very idyllic indeed.

Learning at MSU is not confined to the classrooms. The campus and the region, with its upheavals and quiet times, are a social and cultural laboratory. The engaging and electric atmosphere at MSU produces firmly grounded graduates like you - strong, resilient, smart and brave. I dare anyone to go to any university in the world, and discover an experience as pristine and exciting as MSU. He will not find one that can even compare.

Last Sunday, lying on my bed in Washington, tired from packing my things for this trip, I dreamed of MSU. Upon waking up, I wrote a poem. It is about the Sleeping Lady by the Lake, our muse, the personification of the Alma Mater. Please bear with me as I recite:

One day after a drizzle  
I found her resplendent,  
Her beauty bathed  
In the blinding torrent  
Of light among the crowd,  
Her spirit shooting up  
Against the light gray sky.  
I was mesmerized where she stood  
She whose existence I can only imagine  
She whose secrets are buried deep  
In her sleepy, teasing smile.  
After last night  
With her alluring tresses  
There is only her and me  
In communion of the spirit,  
In threshold of tenderness.  
Oh Alma Mater, dear MSU,  
Cuddle me in the magic of  
Your inexplicable love and concern.  
And I will sigh no more.

Palakpak naman diyan.

Now, let's return from orbit. I pose a question. Why are we here in the universe? We are here simply because the universe exists. There is no use for the universe if there is no one to appreciate it. Our mission is to see it, to witness its unfolding, to discover, to comprehend, and best of all, to celebrate. Your MSU education will enable such appreciation. And, remember, at every turn of your discovery, -- celebrate, celebrate as you taste the amazing and dazzling sweetness of the universe.

What is a world without problems? Dull and boring. True, the problems are chaotic, perplexing, and mind-boggling. Like it or not, you will be called upon to solve its problems. Technology advances will be rapid and furious. You will greet the dawn with science and technology. Regrettably, however, compassion, understanding and kindness between peoples will take a languorous pace. You therefore shall go deep into a myriad of social and cultural issues with more focus and intensity than is being done at present.

In the next 50 years, technology, from information systems to materials, will be approached at the sub-atomic levels. Hybrid systems will mimic biology. Bio-engineering will be simple (1 + 1). Computer systems will behave more like human brains. Airplane wings will adapt to different flight conditions, much like bird wings do now. Systems will be self-sensing and self-correcting. The present silicon-based computer chip will belong in a museum next to the dinosaurs. People will live to the limits of the bodies they were born with. Living to 100 years will be a norm. Global climate can be changed to make sustainable development a reality. People may be in Mars sipping Starbucks coffee.

To the Graduates, my question is: are you ready for the universe, are you ready for these advances, are you ready for these challenges? Let me hear your answer, please. Louder. I agree. With your MSU education, I proclaim you are ready. Believe me, believe yourself, you are ready. Your preparation will meet its appointed opportunity. So, relax muna kayo today, and don't worry.

Why do I say you are ready? Let me tell you. Our first graduates are leaders in the persons of our MSU officials -- President Umpa, Executive VP Manong Saranggani, Dr. Abdullah Alonto, grandson of our founder Senator Domocao Alonto. In engineering in the 1960s, my own students, saw their first motors and generators only during their senior years in industrial plants in Iligan. We didn't have them in the campus. I just drew the machineries on the board. What they lacked in equipment, they got strong fundamentals, the basics, not rote. I followed the careers of some of them. These alumni are now exalted leaders in the profession, to name a few: Angel Santiago, Jr., BSEE 1968, President of EDCOP, the oldest engineering consulting firm in the Philippines employing more than 500 engineers at one time, with projects all over Asia; Rolando Mirano is President and CEO of Mitsubishi Elevators and Escalators; Sonny Rubin, Vice President of the multi-billion peso Malayan Insurance, the second largest in the country; Bert Gesalta, first VP of the PLDT; Rolando Platon, Chief of Seafdec, the largest aquaculture research center in the world; Pastor Torres, Jr., electrical engineer turned aquaculture engineer who converted thousands of hectares in Sumatra to prawn production; and many more alumni in the field, Muslims and Christians.

In my travels around the Philippines and abroad, I meet countless MSU alumni who are trailblazers in the profession, in business, local politics, arts and culture, in academics and other areas. In the Middle East hundreds of our alumni are making names for themselves. A scientific laboratory in Kuwait is named after an MSU alumna, Ms. Duremdez. It is still in national politics that MSU is wanting. By now, we should have Presidential and senatorial candidates in the May

elections. But, we don't. Hello, College of Law! So, what is the secret to MSU alumni success? Basics, strong basics, fundamentals. Faculty, great, dedicated faculty. And foremost -- students, brilliant students. When MSU started in 1962, there were only 3 PhDs, including President Isidro, and 4 Master's degree holders in the entire university. In 1963 there were only four of us in the engineering faculty. Now, MSU has so many topnotch PhDs and MS and MAs in the faculty. Under their tutelage, students are as effectively mentored as any other anywhere in the world. So, I repeat, you are more than ready to go and to find your way into the chaos and confusion. We can release you now.

At this point, let us give our faculty a round of applause for their role in your development. Better still, I want to lead you in the rah, rah, rah. Please rise. Three cheers for the faculty -- hep, hep, hooray! hep,hep, hooray! hep,hep, hooray!

Remain standing, please, let's play some more. To be specific, please close your eyes, think of one member of the faculty, just one not two, who held you spellbound and proud to learn, who made you feel alive in his or her class, that someone who made you believe that nothing is impossible. Think, and at the count of three, shout his or her name loud. Are you ready? one, two, three...Shout! Let's give them a big hand.

Now, that we are all wide awake, let's move on.

Congratulations to all of you. You deserve every letter in Congratulations. You have worked hard in the campus for years. You have spent sleepless nights worrying about grades and getting up in the morning after having so much fun the night previous. Starting tomorrow, there will be no more exams, no more meager allowance to budget, and no more dates to worry about. Good-bye MSU. You become an alumnus. Great feeling, this release!

But hey, dear Graduates, goodbye to books and professors, and campus sweethearts does not mean a stop to learning. No, no... MSU alumni never stop learning, and you shall not. After a brief rest, it is incumbent upon you to pick up the pieces and to develop yourself anew to be one with humanity. Become sensitive to other people's suffering, pain, joy and happiness. With your unique experience in the University, you are in the best position to feel such sensitivity. Open your heart to empathy towards people. Welcome the blossoming, and celebrate it with all your might.

Wow, looking at you this morning, I can't help but feel envy. I envy your youth. I envy your youngness. I envy your rosy cheeks. I envy your freshness. I envy your enthusiasm to meet the battles you will fight. If you will let me, please let me, I am willing to go with you in the journey, to do it over again, and again. Armed with guts, wit and wisdom, I will confront anew everything that was wayward and scintillating with my life; to savor everything that's been great; to wrestle with all the mistakes; to agonize with all the problems, and to enjoy every night the little victories of the day.

Forty years from now, I'll be 100. I intend to be alive at 100. I want to see you then at your young 60, and I will ask you, "Did you enjoy the journey as much as I did?" I hope you will say Yes. If you say No, then you did not live yours to the fullest. Sorry na lang. You blew it, Brother. You missed it, Sister.

To help you with a Yes to my question, let me offer 10 tips, ala David Letterman:

1. Listen to your own consciousness, the inner awareness in you, because that is the real you. Discover your self. When you are founded on that consciousness, you will survive everything. Nobody can take anything away from you. Follow this: At the end of each day, sit comfortably, close your eyes, and be silent for twenty minutes or so. Don't think of anything. Silence is the womb of creation. It is in that silence that you will discover your self. Creativity will spring from that silence, from that womb.
2. Be yourself, don't be somebody else. After graduation, it's an entirely new ball game out there. If you are not a \*\*\*\*\* laude, or if it took 8 years to finish a course, so what, it doesn't matter now. Let \*\*\*\*\* laudes be \*\*\*\*\* laudes, and let you be you. Learn from your experiences, day in day out, moment to moment. You are your own teacher. Kani-kaniyang diskarte yan. Evolve your very own diskarte, yourself.
3. Love yourself. You are unique. You are special. No one in the world solves the problems of one who does not love him or herself. You can spend years thinking that if someone could just love you the right way, then everything will be okay. That is not true.
4. Try anything and everything, look vertical and horizontal, up and down, search high and low until you find something that you love to do. Find a cause and get behind it. Don't sit in the sidelines obsessing things would change. Debilitating procrastination is not for MSU graduates.
5. There are many roadblocks along the way. The most difficult is to lose faith in yourself, or Pagtitiwalang lubos sa sarili. Leave it to others to have doubts about you. Just don't pay attention to them. Don't worry about what people think of you. In the first place, they really are not thinking about you. On the other hand, they may be worried about you thinking about them. Nagkalokoloko na tayo kapag ganoon. Pinoproblema mo, eh ni hindi ka naman pala iniisip nung tao.
6. Make mistakes your ally. You will make mistakes many times. They are not failures, they are just mistakes. Learn from them. Mistakes only show that the goals are lofty, high, and that is okay. Don't give up. Rest if you must, but don't quit. The mark of your MSU character is the boldness of your reaction to mistakes, and your modesty to success.
7. Be thankful for the talents you have, and use them. Dive into them. If you think you have them, indulge in them. Act on stage, sing in the opera, tryout for the PBA, join the star search, build the fastest computer, and show your talent. Make your talent ooze out to the

audience, and to people you meet. If you did not get the singing or acting part, it's okay. The leading lady might take notice, and have a crush on you. You still win. Para kang tumama sa lotto.

8. Project the grandest vision possible because you become what you project. Pursue your vision on the plane of bliss. Bliss is happiness a thousand-fold. Summon your courage, heart and instinct to follow your bliss.

And take time to acknowledge joy when times are grand, however fleeting. For example, on a day in the future, you are on the beach, underneath swaying coconut palm trees, it's summer time, you are looking into the eyes of your sweetheart, the two of you sharing a picnic, and exchanging sweet nothings. I love you. I love you, too, Sweetheart. What could be grander than that. Register it as a milestone for the day? Indulge in its sweetness.

9. Listen with all your heart and mind to those who love you most -- your parents, wife, husband, sweethearts, brothers and sisters, and best friends. On the other side, make a list of people who don't believe in you, those who belittle your worth. All of us have some of these people. Make a list and text them or send them a note, and tell them to back off or go jump in Lake Lanao.
10. On the esoteric side, don't be afraid to dream beautiful, exotic, magnificent, splendid, sublime dreams. Dreaming is easier than spending your life wishing you should have done some dreaming. You will be utterly disappointed for not even trying to dream. Without a dream, you will not even wish for anything. It will all be buntung-hininga. Ayayay. Indeed, today is a very special day. In closing, here is my charge. I want you to do something for me, please, -- one sincere, loving act. I am your real-life Drama Director here. Listen closely with all your heart.

I don't care if you have not been demonstrative all your life. But this time around I want you to be demonstrative, to be expressive, to be loving, to be emotional. When the program is finished, walk over fast to your mother and father, -- and hug them tight, yakapin ninyo sila ng mahigpit, and lift their arms like Rocky. Kiss them on both cheeks, and looking at their eyes, say, "Nanay, Tatay, Ama, Ina, thank you for you. Thank you for this Celebration, thank you for giving me life, thank you for being here with me to celebrate."

Make them cry. You can cry yourself. Don't be ashamed to cry. The crying you is the real you. And you will feel great. Okay, I will watch you do that.

May the Almighty be with you always. Go in Peace.

I bid you farewell.