

Good morning! I confess, I am a person who is too easily startled. In my defense, UP has been a series of unprecedented events. Your first IKOT ride, the long queue at Ate Jofel's, your professor who turned out to be a demonstration leader, your initially quiet classmates who have evolved as student leaders, the opening of Lumad Bakwit School in campus, and the use of what has been a shelter for activism as a shelter for those affected by COVID-19.

Today, we are finally wearing our hard-earned Sablay. But our batch is in for one last surprise with probably the most unexpected of them all—a pandemic and a virtual recognition ceremony.

While we entered UP carrying our own visions of who we aspire to be, our brilliant professors, insightful orgmates and coursemates and our very personal experiences in campus have imparted to us new ways of thinking and new skills. CSSP taught us to resist a singular way of examining notions, to challenge the orthodox, and to break free from false dichotomies. In line with this year's theme, there is a familiar term that I would like to ponder on, wisdom. Through the years, I have learned that wisdom is a collaboration of asking the difficult questions, learning without ceasing, and planting one's self on real people and real concerns. The wise understands her environment, knows it well, and moves as a part of it. It is by developing a deeper understanding of our society and a deeper sense of what it means to be a part of it that we are able to serve it better.

It is now more than ever that our nation is in need of the wise. It needs people who empathize with each other. As we are equipped with knowledge, we are called to apply it. This is wisdom—knowledge in action and knowledge in service. It needs the selfless, the curious, the creative, the humble, and the compassionate.

As I prepared this message for our unconventional yet still very special day, I remembered the remark by Noam Chomsky, the father of modern linguistics: "A language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is." True enough, what made me love linguistics is that for every language we surveyed, we discovered a distinct way of living and thinking and were enlightened of the issues and needs that are likewise unique to each linguistic community. Just as we are diverse in our strengths and fields of study, our service can be expressed through various means, each unique to where we are called to serve.

For those who are called to be in a position to lead locally or nationally, service will be resisting the system. It will be awareness of the structural factors that lead to poverty and marginalization such as government policies, violence, patriarchy, racism, and many more, so that we can address the problem from its roots, collaborate on sustainable solutions and make the right decisions for all such as the implementation of the MTB-MLE in our

linguistically diverse country. Some of us will be teachers who will go beyond to serve knowing that there is a next generation to educate. Service may be applying what we have learned about the human mind and emotions to help fix relational strains between relatives and friends. For those who are called to be town planners, language policy makers, and researchers, service will be identifying the existing problems, collecting and analyzing data, and predicting trends for these details are key in reshaping our society. Wherever it is that life takes us, service will be setting the standard of integrity and excellence. All of these will be tiring, but always worth it.

These days, I have seen service as words of comfort to those who mourn, to those who have lost something and someone. Service can be words of encouragement to those whose dreams have been put to a halt and to those who are fearful of what lies ahead.

Everyday we have the opportunity to serve. In the face of a health and economic crisis, buy goods from our local farmers and small businesses. Support struggling jeepney drivers. Pay closer attention to a friend who has been down lately. These acts will not earn us citations, awards, and not even a viral Facebook post. But it is in those moments void of recognition and gratitude that I urge you to do it still and do it again because the change we want to see happens one anonymous act of service at a time.

Dear batchmates, you are some of the brightest and bravest people I have met and my prayer is that as we step out of Palma Hall, our home for several unforgettable years, whatever we discover and gain, we will aspire to share with anyone who will need it.

Servanthood speaks no one language. My request to you is that whatever language your service may be, do not let it die. Do not let it be silenced by injustices, by our own privilege, and self-interest. No, not even by a pandemic. Let it be unique and let it influence.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us reach this milestone. We share this victory with all of you. Congratulations to us all! Hinihintay na ng bayan ang sopresang dala ng iyong dunong at paglilingkod. Kibuton naton sanda!

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