

Welcome Remarks

By

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Respected Excellences, honored guests, graduating students, distinguished faculty and staff, family members and friends: It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the University of Cambodia's 10th annual Graduation Ceremony.

Today we gather together to honor not only our graduates, but also those who have supported them and encouraged them; financially, emotionally, and spiritually throughout the turbulent journey that is the university experience. Families, friends, and faculty, as we celebrate the accomplishments of your loved ones; remember - this is your day too. Please give them a round of applause.

Today we are pleased to have many honored guests in attendance; I would like to take a brief moment to thank them for their time, and to welcome them to UC. H.E. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, H.E. Oknha Chear Ratana, Professor David Cohen, and Mr. Wang Jiemin. Please give them a warm welcome.

Since its founding, The University of Cambodia has become one of the leading and most reputable higher education institutions in Cambodia. The University has fostered an intellectual community where the faculty facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, create and share knowledge, refine and challenge ideas, and serve their families and communities through social work. The rigorous and supportive learning environment at UC fosters open and constructive dialogue and promotes strong critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills among students. Simultaneously, students are challenged to address the increasingly complex issues in society, and discover meaning in their own lives through UC's innovative undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses.

In addition to quality courses, UC offers numerous extra-curricular programs for students to supplement their learning with hands on experience. UC Students are encouraged to not only excel in the classroom, but also to become involved in social groups, student organizations, and to give back to the community. UC has one of the most active and developed student organizations in the country, with UC Student Senate members organizing successful university-wide functions that include educational, social, cultural, and community service activities. This year UCSS has executed some great events, such as, the Mock ASEAN-China Summit, and UC Welcome Weeks. The 8th mandate is currently coming to a close, as they completed one of their final projects just two days ago with a large celebration on campus for International New Year's Day. Our debate team has won numerous competitions throughout the year, and remains one of Cambodia's top university debate clubs. In addition, students have many other opportunities to gain experience outside of the classroom through the UC Sport Team, the Red Cross Youth of UC, and UC internships.

Our beautiful new UC building will be finalized in the coming months, and should be completely operational by April 2015. The new building will consist of 11 floors, and will be able to accommodate 10,000 students. Our newly renovated multi-media language lab is already operational and is open to all UC students who wish to practice and improve their

English skills. However, this is hardly the end for this great campus; we are currently in the planning stages of building a brand new, state of the art library building, consisting of numerous floors for books, study areas, and computers. We envision creating a space where UC students can spend their down time studying in a quiet and comfortable environment. This new library will not only be a resource for UC students, but it will be open to the public as well, in an effort to promote a culture of reading and self study in our community.

Over the years, UC has hosted many distinguished visitors, including numerous Nobel laureates, and has conferred 34 honorary doctorate degrees. Some of the more notable recipients include, Prime Minister, Samdech Techo Hun Sen, H.E. Sok An, Jackie Chan, Oliver Stone, Rikhi Thakral, Dr. Eric Maskin, Dr. David Gross, and Dr. Torsten Wiesel. UC continuously strives to attract distinguished visiting professors and lecturers in order to broaden the minds of our students, and provide them with a well rounded educational experience. In fact, UC has just launched two new programs entitled, Friends of UC and Partners of UC, which are intended to attract distinguished individuals, businesses and organizations to give lectures and hold seminars for our students. As these programs develop, they will create a large network that will be mutually beneficial for all members of the UC community.

Now to get back to the celebration at hand:

Graduates, today we celebrate you: your hard work, your perseverance, your commitment, your successes, and even your failures which have taught you important lessons. Today is your day; today you move into an elite group of individuals who can call themselves UC Alumni. Your relationship with UC doesn't end today; no, it simply changes form. After these many years of studying at UC, you now have the chance to give back. To connect with current students; to motivate them, to encourage them, to use the vast network of businesses, individuals and organizations that make up the UC family to your benefit, and in turn, to the benefit of our great nation.

This ceremony marks the conclusion of a journey years in the making. Yet as the saying goes, when one door closes another one opens. And although today is the end of your undergraduate, graduate or PhD. experience at UC, it is the beginning of another chapter in your lives. Whether you are planning on graduate school, studying abroad, finding a job, or perhaps something else entirely; this celebration marks the first day of your new adventure.

You are graduating into an unprecedented time in Cambodia's history; development is soaring, educational standards are on the rise, and ASEAN integration is right around the corner. The possibilities for your generation are endless. You have received an education in the era of technology, with access to a whole world of information at your fingertips. As educated youth, you must realize that you are the future; the future of Cambodia, the future of the world. As you walk away from this ceremony with a university diploma in your hand, you inherit a special responsibility. As a college graduate you can no longer live only for yourself, for when you raise yourself up, it is your responsibility to raise up others around you as well.

Although you are graduating into a climate of unprecedented opportunity in Cambodia; globally, we are facing challenges that span national borders and political parties. Your generation is statistically the most open and tolerant in history, and this culture puts you in a prime position to help solve the global problems of today. The world counts on educated populations to protect society against poverty, inequality, climate change, energy security, and violence. It's not a question of whether or not we need to address these issues; that is obvious –The question really is, how can we act? And what should we do? The answer to those questions is complicated, and right now there is no global consensus on how to address these pressing problems of our time. However one thing remains certain, finding a solution requires optimism, hope, dedication and drive; in other words, the spirit of youth.

It is my hope that you will seize the opportunities the ASEAN Economic Community will create; that you will learn, grow, experience other cultures, practice and hone the skills you've learned at UC, and become a true ASEAN citizen, even a global citizen. And then, return home, return to Cambodia and build up the human resources of our great nation. Get involved and help find solutions to these complicated global problems. Without your hard work and expertise, Cambodia will never reach its full potential. It is your responsibility as education citizens to raise up those around you, and to protect society. Never forget that.