

SPEECH

Presiding Officer,

Professor Tan Eng Chye,

NUS President

Mr Wu Tuck Seng,

President, Singapore Pharmacy Council

Distinguished guests,

fellow graduates,

ladies and gentlemen.

A very good afternoon to all of you.

I am humbled, and honored to deliver this address on behalf of the class of 2018 and I wish to thank you for this opportunity to deliver the valediction.

Fellow graduates, these **blue robes** represent the *final* chapter of our **epic**, *four year saga of* University life. They represent the many unique stories of laughter, joy and sorrow that we have lived and breathed together.

And together, we've **made** it. We **made** it through hours of pharmacotherapy lectures. Through days in the lab preparing medications for imaginary patients. Through weeks of counselling exams with our lecturers. Through the silence while we waited for results of our internship placements. And even, through the long lines at the Science Canteen.

As we celebrate another milestone in our lives, it is fitting to ponder how Pharmacy education has shaped us. And so I've thought about three ways which our Pharmacy experience has brought us closer to achieving our shared aspirations.

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Firstly, it has encouraged us to develop a *thirst for knowledge*. Right from the start, Pharmacy challenged us to be masters of our domain, to go not only in depth, but to broaden our perspectives; and to free ourselves from the confines of our lecture notes. We also had world-class lecturers, and perhaps, a world-class ability to shade bubbles, labelled a to e. Some of our most treasured moments, came from our lecturers' creative efforts at teaching. We all remember Prof Joyce Lee and her diabetic monkey plushie, which she would jab with needles to demonstrate insulin techniques.

We also took ownership of our learning, questioning the status quo. And through research, we each laid claims on the academic frontier. Some of us even published our first paper, in journals that will go on to shape clinical practice.

But the rigour of the course came with its fair share of challenges, which brings me to my next point, the *value of persistence*. Pharmacy challenged us to persist amidst difficulties. To be steadfast in our intellectual curiosity in the face of adversity. To embrace change and adapt to it.

We were the first to experience a new curriculum, one that packed four years of content into three. My friends, how we toiled day and night in the libraries, sometimes never seeing the mid-day sun? And how many desperate texts did we send to our classmates at one in the morning, before a deadline, or a paper?

But, here we are today, wearing the same robes, the same caps and with the same sheer determination that pulled us through the last four years. We supported one another and ensured that no one lagged behind. Reminded our friends of looming deadlines. Practiced our counselling on each other. Lent our notes to absentees, while missing 8 AM lectures altogether. Thank goodness, we pushed for webcasting.

We worked hard because in our hearts we knew that it was up to us to make sure that we were the best that our patients got. And that reveals the significance of my third and most important point. Empathy. In Pharmacy, we built up our capacity for empathy. We learnt, to listen and not judge. To empathise and not to pity.

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Perhaps nothing prepared us as much as counselling patients, both mock and real. I remember our first few counselling practicals, most notably because our lecturers played the most improbable characters. Dr Wong Lilian, would play James, a young clubber aged 23, who smoked 15 cigarettes each day. Between the careful nuances of smoking cessation counselling, she would stress the virtues of active listening.

Empathy-building went beyond the margins of our curriculum. Beyond the classroom, we worked at community pharmacies, for the nuanced learning experiences that only real patients can offer. Many of us were also involved with social causes, particularly community health programmes. Like conducting health screenings, or supporting a clinic set up for migrant workers. No matter where we were, the world was our classroom.

As we reflect on the importance of empathy, let's not forget the kindness that was extended to us. Thank you parents, families and loved ones, for being there for us at every stage of our lives, and supporting us through this journey. Thank you professors for your passion, dedication and enthusiasm, and the admin staff for your unwavering support. We could always count on you for the best learning experiences.

And from the bottom of my heart, thank you class for the diverse, fond memories that made every day special. Thank you for caring for your classmates as if they were family, and for the littlest moments that enriched our experiences and made the value of a University education worth more than what ranked us on a 5-point scale.

My dear friends, what shall we make of the next chapter? The journey ahead is an exciting one. The Pharmacy sector is poised for disruption, driven by unprecedented advancements in technology, from industry to patient care. We will also face demographic shifts that will force us to reimagine the way we practice pharmacy.

And so, in the white coats we will soon wear, I am confident that we will embrace change; and be the makers of change. Today we shall set sail for uncharted waters. We will wield technology to be trailblazers in our paths, to seek the best outcomes that our patients and our communities deserve. We will improve ourselves, to shape

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lives for the better. And we must always remind ourselves that being humble, matters.

Class of 2018, go forth and shape lives. Congratulations and the very best to all of you.

Thank you.