

Nguyen Tu-Dung
March 28, 2020

Valedictorian Speech

Honorable President of University of Tsukuba Professor Kyosuke Nagata, Provost of Graduate School of Business Sciences Professor Akio Otsuka, Honorable faculty members, distinguished guests, administrative staffs, and my fellow grads, my name is Nguyen and I am very honored to be the valedictorian from the Graduate School of Business Sciences, MBA-IB program.

Class of 2020, congratulations on our graduation! We made it!

Time flies. I still remember the first day of our orientation. As Moira Rogers put it: “The two hardest things to say in life is hello for the first time and goodbye for the last.” Thank God we’ve made it through the first hardest thing: saying hello. We said “Hi”, we asked each other’s names, jobs, purpose of joining the program, class preferences and everything we could think of to continue the conversation. As time has gone by, we got to know each other better during classes, projects, study trips and ... nomikai for sure. We made friends; we studied; we talked; we sat silent; we fought; we made peace; we laughed; we cried; we’ve graduated together. And again, congratulations!

Confession time! Throughout two years, I have been always asking myself this one question: “Am I good enough?” I’ve always had this insecurity with me since I was a kid. On the day I received the announcement that I had passed the Entrance Examination, I thought to myself: “That’s strange. There must have been a mistake” since I did not believe I was capable of studying at one of the highly ranked national universities in Japan, the University of Tsukuba. “Am I smart enough for this program?” “Am I talented enough to make it through?” This inferiority complex sometimes manifested through avoidance behavior. I used to feel more comfortable fading into the background, withdrawing into my own shell and refuse to express my ideas. But thankfully, I had my dear Professor Caroline Tan, who had told me off for running away (from her). Thankfully, I was in a close proximity with wonderful and talented classmates who never criticized over people’s different points of view. Thankfully, Tsukuba University gave us so many valuable opportunities for learning like Overseas Business Studies or extracurricular activities like CFA Research Challenge. Being exposed to lots of activities and being asked to express and prove myself, I could gradually build up my self-confidence and self-worthiness. Lesson learned: Don’t feel intimidated. There is nothing to be inferior about. The fear is only generated by ourselves. So stop letting fear get the better of us. Be confident, my mates!

Today is a big day for all of us. Starting as master candidates, today we all have finally earned ourselves the master's degree we have dreamed of. After graduation, there are no late night classes on weekdays, no early classes on weekends. No deadlines. No homework. No chasing and hiding. However, I am sure life is not going to be any easier. But, no matter how hard life is, promise me that you will never give up easily. "Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly," said Robert Kennedy. Keep in mind that failure is the key ingredient for the recipe of success. When things are tough, remember why you wanted to start in the first place and keep trying. You are braver than you think you are; I am sure about that.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to those who guided and supported us to complete this journey. First and foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor, Professor Caroline Tan, for her comprehensive knowledge, professional experiences, insightful comments and lots lots of chasing, scolding, criticizing so that I can get my thesis done. Honestly, she has always been an important pillar of strength to me, guiding me not only through my Business Project but also in other facets of my life. I can never thank her enough for that. Thank all the faculty members for their diligence to teaching, for all the informative lectures, valuable advice and continuous support for us throughout the program. Thank all the staffs for making our student life easier. Thank all of my classmates for all the fond memories we've made, for the friendships that I believe some of which will last for a lifetime. Many thanks go to my friends back home in Vietnam and in different parts of the world (Huong, I'm talking about you) for sticking with me through thick and thin. And last but not least, I want to thank everyone in my family with all my heart. They have always been there, right beside my side over my entire educational journey. Thanks for all the support, sacrifice, words of wisdom and never-ending love. I would not be myself today without you all. I love you.

One thing that makes me sorry the most is that I cannot celebrate my commencement ceremony with my dear friends and professors due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, I am sure that if I stood in front of you all, delivering this speech, I would not be able to keep my emotions in check. So it is fortunate in a sense that you will not see me burst into tears and I will not see Professor Tan's glare when I make funny faces during my speech. Here comes the aforementioned quote by Moira Rogers: "The two hardest things to say in life is hello for the first time and goodbye for the last." I realized that I could only do the former but will never be able to do the latter. Because good friends don't say "Goodbye", so let's simply say "See you soon." Wherever you are, I hope you can recognize your full potentials and make them flourish. My best wishes to you and yours and take care until we meet again.