KEYNOTE COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

FOR

JEAN PAJE

Hello everyone, and thank you for allowing me the chance to speak with all of you today. This ceremony marks the completion of a very important step in a person’s life, high school graduation, and as such, I am inspired to share thoughts and ideas with you about what my educational experience was like and what life has been like since I completed my formal education, left school, and started to live my adult life. Whether you are a graduate, family member, friend, or distinguished guest, I am sure you know that education is essential, and whether you receive that education within the four walls of a wonderful place like this school or in the “schoolhouse” of life itself, to have the opportunity to learn is precious. To have knowledge is truly the gift. It is THE GIFT OF LEARNING, OUR TOOL FOR NATION BUILDING. It is up to each one of us, and especially you, our graduates, to be as informed and as strong as you possibly can be, to insure a promising future for yourselves, your families, your communities and your country.

In the past several years, I have come a long way from our hometown, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , and the journey has taught me a lot along the way. I am thrilled to return today and tell all of you what I’ve learned since earning my high school diploma here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I’ve worked and travelled and today I will share my beliefs about how knowledge builds a stronger future for all of us.

I have to say that while I was in school, I was an average student, but I knew there was something within me that kept me motivated. I was always curious. I wanted to know more. I wanted to learn more. I went to school and earned my nursing degree here in the Philippines and I currently work as a nurse in San Diego, California. It’s a long way from here and the miles brought me a special kind of education. I learned to work hard, have confidence in myself, care about the success of others-not just my own, and I’ve also learned that my learning really **BEGAN** on my high school graduation day. I now see that life is my school and it doesn’t matter where you are, there is always something to learn. As I said, I currently practice nursing in San Diego, but I have also done whatever I can to support the community, whether in California or my first true home, right here in the Philippines. I am very proud of the work I do for others. I am also the outgoing President of the Fil-Am Organization, (**name the organization**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . This is a group, as you probably know, that believes in supporting the people of the Philippines by offering support and scholarships to students. I am pleased and proud to say that there are 6 graduates here today who have earned scholarships from this great organization and I would like to congratulate each one of you!

I’ve spent a lot of time thinking of what I might say to **all** of you to inspire **each** **one** of you. Whether you’re a student, graduate, family member, friend, or distinguished guest, the most important thing I want you to realize is that learning never ends. As I said, life is our school and experience is our best teacher.

Remember that you are special and unique…and so is everyone else! A long time ago, there was a popular expression-actually there were a few. Someone said, “No man is an island,” and what that means is that we are not alone. As much as we may sometimes want to be alone for a while to think and concentrate, we really are not alone. As much as people have an effect on you, whether you realize it or not, people are inspired **BY YOU**. Stay interested and curious about all the wonders around you and you will be interesting. As you learn, you will naturally have that much more to teach. Learning is not something only taught in school. The purpose of going to school is to give you a foundation. School **teaches** you to **learn**. Another expression that is good to keep in mind is, “I am part of all that I have met.” Every person, place, and situation that you meet, and each experience you have in life has the potential to teach you something new. Keep your eyes and ears open. Ask questions. Be curious. Place one foot in front of the other on the highway of learning and you will keep the opportunity for education alive.

Another expression is, “If you want to be interesting, keep being interested.” Always keep a healthy curiosity about life. Whether it’s politics, the economy, nature, people, there is no reason to stop learning. Keep **motivated**. Although some graduates will be going on to college, some will not be pursuing higher education at this time. That is no reason for you to slow down your education. Whether you will be working or helping your family, remember to **stay interested**. No matter what you do, if there is something you don’t understand, or if there is something you want to know more about, **ask questions**. Take the lessons you’ve learned and think of them as building blocks. They are the foundation that you carry with you that allow you to learn more. Remember that life is your “school.”

As I have said, I invite you to **think of life as your school**. Whether you continue your education by going to college or you choose other paths in life, there are lessons to be learned **everywhere**. Some people say, “I don’t know what I don’t know,” which is true, but you **do** know what it is that you want to learn more about. Are you interested in learning a trade? Do you want to know more about a certain industry? Is there a job you want, and is there training that is needed for that job? Never stop being curious. Always fuel the passion to learn. The more you know, the more you have the opportunity to improve your chance for employment and achieve more personal fulfillment. And by the way, if there is something that **YOU** know and can share with others, remember that you will also learn by teaching. Keep an open mind. Remain curious. Always look to improve your skills.

Always have a vision. Dare to dream. If you can dream of something, you can take the path to make it happen. Every step will bring you knowledge, and whether or not you reach a particular goal is only part of the process. Every step you dare to take will teach you something new, and you may learn and discover new areas of interest or skill along the way. You may find that something you thought was so important is no longer worth pursuing. You may find your true calling in the process.

Graduates, **YOU** are the future. You are the future of your family, your community and your country. You have worked hard to get to this point in life, and others have worked hard to see to it that you have arrived at this point in life so far. Soon it will be your turn to inherit your **legacy**. Soon, you will be the adults who will support your families, work in various businesses and industries, and vote in national elections. You will be the next generation to run the country-on every level. In this class of (**say the number of graduates in the class**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ graduates, some may become doctors, some may be farmers, some of you may become politicians, mothers, or local businessmen. The future is in your hands. Learn about the history you will inherit. Learn about your communities and see where you can contribute time, ideas, manpower to strengthen the future of your nation-on any level. Very soon, this will be your country to maintain and your contribution will be needed and wanted.

I want all of you to realize that no matter where you are in life, you are important. You matter. Your contribution is valuable. To those of you going off to college, congratulations. Keep your eyes and ears open and remember that you are the future. To those of you who are not going to college, I say the same thing. Congratulations. Keep your eyes and ears open and remember that you are the future. Every single one of you is equally important to the growth, health and future of your family, your community and your country. There is a lot of work to be done to strengthen every phase of life and industry and it will take all kinds of people at all levels of experience and knowledge in order to do thorough and valued work, but each one of you has to have the drive, the will and the education to succeed.

Our society, culture, civilization has been built on the knowledge and power of people. As we move forward in life, we learn from all that have travelled the path before us. We can see throughout history where mistakes were made and where brilliant innovations changed the way we live our lives. Learning about life and history is important in order to know how to deal with the future. Graduates, **YOU** are the future, and I encourage all of you to keep your eyes and ears open. Each one of you, no matter where you are in life, will continue to learn and to teach. Gaining knowledge and experience are the reasons we are all placed on this earth, and for each one of you, I wish you a rich, interesting, fulfilling journey. Each one of you is a unique and special person and no matter what path you choose, your future is bright. Just remember to keep an open mind, always stay curious, remember that life is your classroom and enjoy the journey! Congratulations and thank you!