Speech of Senate President Franklin Drilon
37th Commencement Exercises
Cagayan State University
April 8, 2015

PURSUE EXCELLENCE,
LIVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE

CSU President Dr. Romeo Quilang, faculty members and staff, my
dear graduates, friends, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

It is a great honor and privilege to speak before you on this
momentous occasion. It is always a joy to attend graduation ceremonies and
see the happy, vibrant and promising faces of young men and women who
are raring to conquer the world.

I consider each time I speak in commencement exercises as an
opportunity to reach out the youth, listen to their sentiments and feel their
pulse. After all, they hold the future of our beloved country.

Let me commend the efforts of the University officials, led by Dr.
Romeo Quilang, for constantly upgrading this institution’s facilities,
developing a more relevant curriculum and consistently improving the
quality of education. You have made quality education more affordable,
thus, encouraging more students to enroll. Your remarkable effort will rake
in enormous dividends in the long term.
This is the day that our young graduates and their parents and loved ones have been dreaming of and looking forward to it. Let me congratulate all of you for a job well done. However, do not rest on your laurels. Always remember that there is always a room for improvement. Never stop your quest for excellence.

My dear graduates, I share the pride and joy of your family and loved ones. This day would not have been possible if not for their unconditional love, unwavering support and determination to see you through the fulfillment of your dreams. This day is theirs as much as it is yours. I hope that you will not forget to show them your appreciation and gratitude.

Your teachers who have patiently mentored you and equipped you with skills and knowledge that you will need when you leave the academe are equally proud and happy for you. Years from now, you will appreciate the rigorous academic training and the discipline that they subjected you to. I hope you will not forget to thank them before the day ends.

I have received dozens of invitations to speak during graduation from different schools in many parts of the country. Despite long travels and preparation, I always look forward to these occasions as these are perfect
opportunities for me to share my thoughts with young people like you. Hopefully, I can, in my own little way, inspire you to pursue your dreams while never forgetting to give back to your community and country.

Today, a chapter in your life closes and another is about to open. Your diploma is your sweet reward for the seemingly endless nights burning the midnight oil. As you embark on a new journey, I encourage you to hold on to your ideals despite the many temptations you will encounter along the way. Take the road less travelled and make difference in the lives of as many people as possible.

I trust that your parents and mentors have already impressed on you the values of honor, truth, justice, honesty and courage. When you step out of the safe and protective walls of the academe and see the world for what it really is, I hope that you will continue to uphold these values.

Let me caution you that outside the academe, in what we fondly call the “real world”, these are forces that would challenge the beliefs and values you hold dearly. But I trust that you will be able to stay brave and strong even amidst life’s fiercest storm. Break barriers. Blaze new trails. Create new pathways.

Each one of you will follow a different road and live a different life. Regardless of the field you will choose to dedicate your life to, you have to
make a choice early on between the path of excellence and the path of mediocrity. I implore each one of you to always pursue excellence in a principled manner.

The pursuit of excellence should always be a way of life. Use your God-given talents and gifts for the betterment of humanity. Do not settle for what is easy but of lesser value. Do not opt for what is easy but for lesser value. Do not opt for what is convenient but only gives you fleeting rewards. Do not take the easy road if what you get in the end is something you cannot be proud of.

Do not be intimidated by the challenges you will encounter in your journey. Your present circumstances may not be pleasant and rosy but do not be disheartened. In the race called life, it does not matter how you start but how you finish.

It is possible that among you, we have a future Einstein, a Bill Gates, a Henry Sy, a Senate President or even a President of the country. The possibilities are endless. You can excel in any field that you choose to put your heart into. Whatever choice you make, do not just settle in the corner or at the sidelines. Leave an indelible mark.
Always remind yourself that your life is not just about you or your plans and dreams. It is also about your family, your community and your country.

In my long years, I have seen young and promising lives that were wasted on reckless and senseless endeavors. They sacrificed their character and integrity, even their precious life, in the altar of temporary rewards. Do not fail into the trap.

As you go through the highways and byways of life, arm yourself with this timeliness reminder: “Your life is a gift from God. What you will do with your life is your gift to God.”

Congratulations. God bless you all.