Message to the Alumni

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I am honored to invoke the presence of the Lord who has been very kind and loving for having kept us safe on our way here. We are here tonight because we remember Central Philippine University with pride and gratefulness in our hearts for having made us the kind of individuals we had hoped we will become and even more. Indeed, all of us have traveled far and wide in our quest to make better people out of ourselves. Some of us have moved mountains to attain success in our fields of endeavor. We have made sacrifices along the way so we can harvest the rewards that we are experiencing now. Some on the other hand had a smooth sailing ride to the platform of success. Yes, we did our best to soar high and continue to make a difference in the lives of others through our alma mater.

This Global Reunion is not just a reunion, in its simple definition. This affair is an opportune time to see former classmates and schoolmates. It is time to have updates on each other’s lives, to share stories of our successes thus far and the plans that we have for the future. It is also a time to remember with fondness, the times and experiences we have had at Central – re-tell stories of our pranks and childishness in class; perhaps smile at the memory of boyfriends, and girlfriends, and how we find it amusing or unforgettable now; remember former teachers, especially the ones that inspired us to dream, and follow our dreams; recall our rich student life at CPU, with all the activities that enriched our views of the world, and complemented our rigid and competitive academic life. We also bring to mind CPU in its physical sense – how Roblee Science Hall has become an indelible structure in some Centralians’ minds, how
you played football at the big field even on a rainy day, or how the half-moon shed or the banaba tree has been a silent witness to all your stories, good or bad. Yes, this is the essence of the reunion – to recollect the many different activities and experiences that have filled our buckets of memories, all through the years.

This 8th global reunion is also a good time to think about the last time you were at CPU – how you entered the gates of our alma mater with hearts full of anticipation and pride at what our dear Central has become. Truly, Central Philippine University has achieved more than what it has hoped for. We have worked hard to continue the legacy of our forebears – the American Baptist Missionaries.

The 24-hectare campus, then with its humble beginnings and structures, now stands strong and firm with all the many improvements and developments thus far. Many of these changes were brought about during the tenure of my predecessors. For the last 22 months since the last reunion in Sidney, Australia, CPU has experienced more changes in response to new challenges. We have added a fourth floor to the Engineering building to alleviate our growing pains, and modify the façade to harmonize with Franklin Hall, and Roblee Science Hall. The earthquake damaged Alfonso Uy building was rehabilitated costing more than two million pesos. There we discovered what hollow- block walls mean for some contractors, and short-cuts in construction. Your donations augmented the budget for the repainting and renovation of buildings and comfort rooms. Special mention to the CPUFOAA under the leadership of Ms. May Vail Lee, the many alumni chapters worldwide and Ann & Loy Seisa who spearheaded the fund raising for the renovation of the Loreto D. Tupaz building and the assistance of the Nurses in Southern California led by Ms. Perlita Rebanal.

Today’s generation of students bask at the chance of maximizing their academic life in preparation for their professional career through the equipment, software, and facilities that have been acquired all these years through your unending support. The equipment donated to the Chemical Engineering Laboratory has evolved into a significant landscape in the development of the country. What started as a Water Analysis lab has spawned a Soils Analysis lab, and now with the purchase of an Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer we are able to gain a foothold in consultancy work not
just in Panay but also in other parts of the country. CPU serves all water districts in Panay in making sure that drinking water quality is maintained.

Our faculty and staff have never stopped thinking of ways to improve the university. We now have many capable, and well-prepared personnel that prepares our students to become competitive and well-trained in their areas of specialization. Our faculty are given the opportunity to pursue advanced degrees so that when they return to CPU, they are able to become more effective in their specialties. Thanks to the alumni for the faculty and staff development endowment fund.

Our research program was jumpstarted by the support of the alumni. For the years 2011 through 2014 CPU has received research grants of more than 9 M pesos, unprecedented in the history of CPU. The research work and International publication of the dean of CPU CARES is the national winner of the CHED REPUBLICA award for 2013 in the Natural Science and Agriculture category. The competition focused on priority disciplines and development goals of the country. It is interesting to note that the other national qualifiers are from UP, Dilliman, UP Los Banos, Ateneo de Manila, UST, De LaSalle University, Ateneo de Davao and Francisco Urias University. Our outreach programs has expanded to livelihood projects for those who are in need, thanks to the alumni’s response to the victims of typhoon Yolanda. All these things we are grateful for, especially to you who have given back to CPU. Your donations and assistance are not without good result. We make it our mission to be good stewards of all that you have shared with us. Most of you must have already read my report for the school year 2013-2014 posted on CPU’s website. Indeed you dear alumni have made a difference so that the future of others will be brighter.

Let me share with you some of our key directions for the next 5 years. I should say 4 years and four months since my term ends October 31, 2018.

2. More programs attaining Center of Development status.
3. More programs accredited level IV, the highest level of accreditation beyond the 8 programs we already have.
4. Strengthen Christian ministry with the unified approach and emphasizing CPU's core values of Faith, character, justice, stewardship, and excellence.

5. Involve more faculty in research and development emphasizing multidisciplinary approach.

6. Maintain & sustain livelihood projects for those who are in need.

7. Build dormitories to address current and future needs for student housing.

8. Build up the Endowment fund for scholarship, work students support, maintenance of campus buildings, faculty development and other needs.

9. Build a Research & Development laboratory to house current and future multidisciplinary researches. Focus research programs on areas that address the country's development goals.

10. Expand linkages with foreign universities and seek international faculty for Distance (online) Education.

11. Extend CPU's presence outside Iloilo City following the success of our extension program in Vietnam in partnership with Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration.

12. Seek external funding through UBCHEA for a Research & Development Center unifying the capabilities of the Colleges of Medicine, Law and Graduate Programs to address health, food security, social justice and good governance concerns of our country.

As we continue to think of ways to improve our alma mater, and to make it more attuned to the global realm, we stop once in a while to look at the developments, and understand why CPU exists and why we are part of its mission. We know that we are in the hands of the Master Teacher and the Great Provider who has sustained CPU all these 109 years. Yes, God provides through you our dear alumni.

The Lord is indeed very kind and generous to us Centralians, and we cannot thank Him more. We would never have achieved this much if not for His love and compassion for us. The only way to thank Him is to put His blessings through you, to good use. We will continue to share our blessings with those around us, and use it to improve the lives of others. Only then can we become truly worthy of His gifts, and His words in Matthew
25:21 will resonate, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness.”

As we continue to reminisce and enjoy the rest of our activities, we put to heart what binds us together – the Central Spirit. It will forever be in our hearts, an inextinguishable flame that keeps us connected with the rest of our kind. It erases the kind of alienation we feel when we are around strangers regardless of differences in generation, gender, and culture. Then we have our permanent goal – to strive for EXCEL or Exemplary Christian Education for life. This is non-negotiable for us Centralians. We teach, for we are an institution of learning, but we teach with a heart. What we teach is founded on the values and ethics that have been provided by the Master Teacher. This is our permanent reality – that the Lord and His teachings are the only basis on how we live our lives. We will never stop making improvements and developments for Central Philippine University. We will continue to provide excellent education for our students, but most of all we will never stop making the Lord the center of our quest for academic excellence.

One hundred nine years ago our forebears undertook quite an impossibility, but they emerged victorious. Through these achievements, let us not forget the words of Nelson Mandela: “After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb”. As stewards of our forebears’ realized dream, let us climb more hills and hurdle more challenges that will come our way.” Together as Centralians, and individually as people with our own dreams and aspirations, let us not stop making our lives, and the lives of those who are in need, better. Yes, let us make a difference in this world. Let this be our aim, let this be an inspiration for us all here tonight. As we seek greater heights for ourselves and our Alma Mater, we continue to live up to our theme – Soaring High and Make a Difference.

Our God is a gracious God and merciful God, a God who answers our prayers, who calls us to do the right work, who light paths and open doors. When I reflect on the gifts we are given from God – those seen and unseen, I am drawn to a well known
passage from Luke chapter 12. Here Jesus tells us simply, “To those whom much has been given, more is required.”

It is this clear instruction that has guided my thinking about the work ahead for Central Philippine University and for my service as president. Ours is a rich legacy. Our past leaders, the American Missionaries have been people of vision, people of courage. People who sought to forego the easy way in favor of the right way. For this tradition we must set out on the next leg of our journey and find our renewed determination. From this understanding of our place, we will write the next chapter in the life of CPU.

I do not pretend to know nor can I predict what will come of our working together. Only God knows the journey in store for us. But when our watch at CPU is over and we are swept away from this earth, what will the generations who follow us say about our response to the many challenges confronting us?

It is my utmost pleasure to be with you tonight. We will go home after this, grateful for the opportunity given us to be here. As we go back to our dear Central Philippine University, we will have good stories to tell Centralians back home about how we have inspired one another into making a difference.

May God bless each one of us in this endeavor. And may God prosper the work of our hands.

Thank you very much. To God be the Glory.