

SPEECH FOR OPENING CEREMONY ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 – 2019

Assoc. Prof. Vo Van Thang*

Dear

- *Ms. Vo Thi Anh Xuan, Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Secretary of the Provincial Commission of An Giang*
- *Dr. Nguyen Thanh Binh, Permanent Member of the Provincial Commission of An Giang, Vice President of People's Committee of An Giang*
- *All honorable international guests and delegates*
- *And all our lecturers, graduate students, and university students:*

With the hearts and minds deeply sympathizing with the disadvantage and hardship that all students in flooded areas all over Vietnam are currently suffering, An Giang University is solemnly organizing the OPENING CEREMONY of the new academic year: 2018 - 2019.

First and foremost, I would kindly like to extend my warmest and most welcoming greetings to all the leaders, international guests, delegates, lecturers, graduate and undergraduate students, students of Pedagogical Practice School, and especially to 300 representatives of all the new students of An Giang University.

Ladies and gentlemen!

I remember very clearly that on last year's this date, just right here in this auditorium, at the opening ceremony, I did propose certain solutions on purpose of successfully undertaking the tasks of the academic year 2017-2018. Today, now that one exact year has passed by, please allow me to take some time to pinpoint certain achievements that our university have reached for the past school year:

- *The Communist Party of our university* has been complete with its full organization. Particularly, three new members has been nominated and elected into the Commission, another into the Permanent Commission; thirty-two party cells were either reorganized or established, with the total number of 666 members; two Departments, one Faculty, and two Centers were newly established; the academic quality of our staff continued to improve: in more detail, in the last academic year our university had one more Associate Professor, 24

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lecturers earned doctorate or master's degrees either nationally or internationally. This increased the number of graduate degree holders to 480. Currently, our university has 48 doctors and 432 masters.

- *The quality of our university education and training was raised:* An Giang University was recognized with the Certificate of Quality Assessment 2018 - 2023 by the National University of HCMC; the Ministry of Education and Training admitted our two new four-year training programs and one new graduate one; our university awarded Master's degrees to 14 graduates and university degrees to 2,543 undergraduates; we cooperated well with the Department of Education and Training to successfully administer the General Exam of High School 2018 for 16,414 candidates; and we also finished the recruitment of university entrance on time.

- *Our scientific research was gradually improved:* 247 research results were reported in either international or national scientific journals (22 of which were international); 132 lecturers presented at national or international workshops or conferences (39 of which were international); international relations were extended: welcoming 53 international companies to visit our university with a total of 276 visitors, which meant there were 101 visitors more than that of the academic year 2016-2017; signing 6 more memoranda with universities from the U.S., Australia, Latvia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines; we also admitted more than 159 lecturers or students from different universities or organizations all over the world to do their internship or realize such programs as VN Field School or Community Service Program. Among them came from Anywhere and Everywhere (the U.S.), International Youth Fellowship (South Korea), the University of Andrews (the U.S.), the University of Yuhan (Korea), the University of Andalas (Indonesia), the Polytechnic of Hong Kong, the National University of Australia, the Applied University of Holland. Currently, our university are undertaking 17 projects, sponsored by 17 either national or international organizations, academic institutes, and universities.

- *Our university competitive drives for the staff were also advanced:* 75 of our staff were recognized as "Best performers of the university of the year"; one team and 50 individuals were awarded by the Provincial People's Committee for their best performances in a row of 2 years; 6 units in our university were recognized as "Excellent staff" of the academic year 2017-2018; we are also nominating 7 individuals for honorable names of

“Best provincial performers of the year”; the Center for Information Technology has gradually provided services to the public effectively.

- *The School of Pedagogical Practice* also reached several great achievements: Ninety-three students won different prizes at such contests as Academic Tests for Excellent Students, Creativity Contest for Teens and Children, Technical and Science Contest, and many provincial skills contests; 100% of the students passed the 2018’s GCSE exam, 96.5 of whom were admitted into universities or colleges; one student of PPS was the highest score achiever in the 2018’s GCSE exam, with the total of 48.25 marks; 95% of the grade-9 students passed the entrance exam into Grade 10 at public schools, among whom was 4 students who were the highest score achievers admitted into TNH High School for the Gifted, one the second highest score achiever into PPS (including 1 specializing in Literature, 1 in English, 1 in Information Technology, 1 into PPS, and 1 in Chemistry respectively) and another who was among the top five highest score achiever into Long Xuyen High School; the boarding services of PPS performed effectively.

- *The student movements* of An Giang University also obtained many great achievements with 2 Certificates of Recognition awarded by the Prime Minister and the Central Association of Students; one student was awarded the state-level award of “the Star of January”; 19 medals for distinguished individuals and 1 medal for the whole team of the National Olympiad in Math, Physics, and Chemistry; AGU’ team also won the first and impressive prizes in the Olympiad in Marxist-Leninist’s Sciences and the Thoughts of HCM for universities and colleges in the Mekong Delta; the English Speaking Club was ranked one of the top ten excellent university-based clubs in Vietnam; AGU was the leading flag for the youth movement in the sector of education in the school year 2017-2018, earning 36 certificates awarded by the People’s Committee of An Giang province and 704 certificates by the Rector of An Giang University; the Fund for Learning Encouragement was raised up to 3.5 million VND;

All in all, we consider all those accomplishments “the Chauffeuse bricks” which have been contributing to building up the traditions, pride, and solidarity to create a sustainable development for our university.

Ladies and gentlemen!

In the academic year 2018-2019, An Giang University continues to implement the Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on “basically and completely innovating the national education and training” of the National Communist’s Party. It is the fourth year that we have been implementing the Acts of Communist Party Delegates. Our university recognizes the subject of this school year as follows: **“Establishing a learning – teaching environment active, effective, and creative”**. To reach this objective, at the Staff Conference just held on September 8th, 2018, all of us did vote and agree on 5 groups of solutions in different facets of our university on purpose of eliminating certain weaknesses and continuing to improve the quality of education and training. Allow me not to restate all those proposals in this ceremony.

Dear all lecturers and students,

“Human-planting career” is a non-stop, lifelong process in which the opening ceremony of each school year is like one breaking dawn of this string of days. The mission of a university is to create new knowledge, train and produce “global citizens”, enable learners to adapt to every single change in a modern society. The Industry 4.0 is not a new thing any longer. Instead, it has been making dramatic changes or even reversing many values of different aspects of life. Byron Auguste, former economic consultant for President Barack Obama and co-founder of Opportunity@work, once said, *“In agricultural economy, fortune is land.... In industrial economy, it is physical capital.... In service economy, it is invisible fortune, like approaches, designs, software, and patents”*. He also said, *“In today’s knowledge-human economy, fortune is human resources, including talents, implied secrets and skills, compassion and creativity”*. Therefore, I find it essential to confirm that, above all, human resources or talents are not only a priceless resource but also a decisive factor for the existence and development of a country or a people in today’s rapidly speeding technology era, in which education takes the responsibility for pioneering.

Hence, what do An Giang University in particular, and Vietnam’s educational system at large, have to do and where do we have to start? I would like to quote Byron Auguste’s as the answer to these questions, *“...in this speeding era we need to rethink about 3 important agreements – those between laborers and laborer users, between learners and educational regulators, between citizens and governments. This is the only way to create an environment in which each individual is able to realize all their potential talents and human capital*

becomes a fortune that is widely used, without transferability". I believe that this is what we must think about and search for solutions and action plans to best fulfill the requirements of "basically and completely innovating the national education and training" as well as of sustainably developing our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this special occasion, please also allow me to say a word to our new students.

Dear all new students,

To the bottom of my heart, I congratulate all of you on fulfilling your dream at the first stage. All of you are truly worthy of being the members of An Giang University, for the fact that you have used your GCSE exam results, but not your high school's academic record, to be considered for the student position and you have successfully won against 13,900 other candidates. As for our university per se, we understand that our current admission approach may be causing some trouble for us in terms of competing with other universities for student candidates, but I am very proud to inform you that we have been consistent in doing this for over the past 10 years and today I am very delighted to announce that despite many obstacles An Giang University continues to attract a great many student applicants and the proportion of successful ones has increased to 95.7% and 81.7% for four-year university and for three-year college respectively.

Now your very first courses at university are going to start. It is obvious that advancements like the Internet of Things, smartphones, tablets, or 3D Technology have dramatically changed the definition of learning and teaching. To progress in our today's world, all what we need to do is to invest in our "starts-up of self". On the way to the future, the search for and preservation of jobs requires *an animate stability*; that is, you must be in action without any pause or stop. Thomas L. Friedman, an American author who has won the *Pulitzer Prize* three times, continues to astonish the world, just after his "*The world is flat*", with his new book "*Thank you for being late*" – a contemporary history work. With a completely new writing style that cannot be found in any of his previous books, he has critical analyses of several aspects of individual life in the 21st century, the essence of which includes technology (Moore's law), international integration, and unexpectedly rapid climate change. Thomas once shared his opinions publicly, "*I went to university for life skills and then for my tastes, and to me, learning is lifelong*". He also said, "*American Dream today is*

more like a journey rather than a destination and it's like people are trying to go upstairs on a descending escalator.” Personally, I totally agree with him in this word “...we all can do that when we are young, but we must walk with a faster speed than that of the escalator. This means that you must work harder, **regularly renew yourselves, finish your high school at least, be committed to lifelong learning, and play with new rules, but at the same time re-inventing certain rules. Then you will be able to step into the middle class.**” (author’s emphasis) I do not have any comments for this word, for it is so concise per se.

Dear our beloved students,

I would also like to extend my congratulations to all the newcomer students. I especially appreciate the newcomers who are the highest and second highest score achievers in our university entrance exam of 2018. I also hope that our graduate students will work hard and finish their courses on time with the best results and that our PPS’s students will actively take part in extra-curriculum activities and study well. I kindly acknowledge the meaningful contributions from our lecturer staff and from our national or international specialists. I would also like to express my great gratitude to the professors of many international academic institutes, universities, or organizations for their attendance at the ceremony today regardless of their faraway workplaces. Specially, I would like to express my special thanks to Professor Philip Kenneth Taylor, anthropologist as well as former lecturer of the National University of Australia, for donating all his 543 highly valuable reference books to the Library of AGU, 349 of which are written in Vietnamese with the main focus on the history and cultures of Vietnam’s Southern Region, 194 in English and 14 scientific journals in a wide range of disciplines.

Moreover, I am really touched with Professor Neal Newfield’s (former lecturer of West Virginia University) special love for An Giang University, who have consecutively organized 13 training workshops on “Social Affairs” for the past 13 years. Before he flew home this year, he said to me about his very plan, “As long as I can walk, I will continue to work for An Giang University”.

And what is more, just at the beginning of this September, once they arrived home, Mr. and Mrs. Ken Phillips, former Australian lecturers, who had seven times spending their monthly stipend on flight tickets to come to work for An Giang University but receiving a very modest salary in return, wrote a letter to me, in which he said, “... *Finally, I can tell you*

that every time I leave Vietnam I also leave a piece of myself in Vietnam. I think that I will never truly leave Vietnam”¹.

I would like to sincerely thank the leadership of as well as the support from the Provincial Commission, People’s Assembly, People’s Committee, the National University of HCMC, all unions and provincial departments for your help and support. I would like to thank all the sponsor individuals and organizations for your great donations that our university is going to receive just in with a few minutes’ time. I would like to thank all of you for saving your valuable time for coming to this school year opening ceremony today. I would like to thank all the reporters for your attention and broadcasting information about this event.

On behalf of An Giang University’s leaders, ***I hereby solemnly declare that the academic year 2018 - 2019 now OPEN.***

¹ ken_phillips_1950@hotmail.com - sent to: vvthang@agu.edu.vn: Sun, Sep 9, 4:01 PM.