

Vietnamese Graduation

June 12, 2016

Speaker: Jennifer Le '16

Chào mừng các bạn, giao sư, phu huyen, và gia đình! Cảm ơn tất cả đã tham dự lễ tốt nghiệp của chúng em. Em tên là Jennifer Le, và em vinh dự để nói chuyện ngay hôm nay.

Welcome graduates, faculty, friends and most importantly our family. Thank you all so much for joining us on our special day. My name is Jennifer Le and I truly honored to be up here speaking at OUR Vietnamese Graduation. Hi. -Looks to the crowd- Sooooo I know you. I know you. I definitely know you. Hey I know all of yall~ I have a question for you all...Why do you think that is? (I know this is most annoying question we were ever asked in this space...) This is because we are all united within one great gia đình called the Vietnamese Student Union.

Let's take a walk down memory lane first starting with what brought most of us in the space in the first place: SEA Admit Weekend. We arrived onto this red-bricked wall campus, expecting to be going into workshops after workshops, but instead learned about the stories behind each brick, each building, each generation, and each individual at SEA Admit. I expected to leave SEA Admit with greater knowledge of UCLA, but I left with tears from chanting for my fellow Teen Titans, awareness for our Vietnamese community and its current conditions that hold us back, and new love from random strangers who I am eager to see again as I decided to SIR to UCLA.

A few months later: Welcome to UCLA with its ridiculously long lines at Feast on pho days even though they weren't even close to the ones mommy made, with its zero week where we pulled voluntary all-nighters and mandatorily volunteered, and with its first VSU GM where we learned about the four pillars that hold our organization together: cultural, social, political, and educational. We joined the two wonderful community service-based projects: SEA CLEAR and HOPE. We broke out of our comfort zones to try out for VSU Modern, Awe-chords and Traditional Dance. We over-committed in all of VSU's programs from High School Conference to Vietnamese Culture Night as our grades plunged, but hey.... Our parents didn't need to know that :)

From every GM, workshop, counseling session, HOPE site, and social our family got bigger and bigger. From one year to the next, we'd pick up new members and welcome them with warm arms. This is one of the my favorite things about this space. There are people who genuinely care about your health, your studies, your opinions, your experiences, your growth, your family, your happiness. We are what one would say "aggressively inclusive", and there are no better words more perfect than these to describe VSU's Class of 2016. Together, we did not only made a huge impact in each other's life, but we touched the hearts of so many. We extended our community on campus further with the love and passion we have to give back.

Now, we are here at our very own Vietnamese Graduation. Our shared love for our community, service, and culture brought us to be the passionate leaders, resourceful mentors, and compassionate friends that we are today. Before UCLA, I never really understood what it's like to have meaningful relationships and what a support system was. It was until I joined VSU when I found my support system that I know will be cheering me on throughout my post-grad career and the rest of my life. You all know who you are, and I want to take this time to thank you all for always having my back. Thank you for pushing me to reach higher than my potential, for encouraging me to speak out for myself and for those who need me, and for always reaffirming that everything I do is worthwhile and is for my community and most importantly for my family.

I would like to end my speech with special thanks to the faculty who are here today and have supported VSU for years, to the Vgrad staff and co-chairs for their hard work planning this wonderful event for us, to all the families who have come today, without your support, we would definitely would not be here graduating from the most applied school in America; and to my parents. With hard-work, patience, wisdom, love, and support, thank you for being my cheerleaders from day one. Be thương ba ma niêu lam!

Congratulations class of 2016. Stay connected, keep in touch. Y'all beautiful!