

**Valedictorian Speech by KENNETH GWEE KHYE JIE (Diploma in Biomedical
Sciences) of
School of Applied Science at
Republic Polytechnic's Graduation 2014 held on
20 May 2014, 1.00 pm, at TRCC (Session 4)**

Guest Speaker

Vice President (Asia Pacific) of Abbott Nutrition International

Mr R Ramachandran

Principal and CEO of Republic Polytechnic

Mr Yeo Li Pheow

Management of Republic Polytechnic,

Distinguished Guests, Parents and Fellow Graduates,

Good afternoon.

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to stand here today, representing the graduates of 2014 to deliver this valedictory. Let me begin by congratulating all graduates for achieving success in your polytechnic journey.

Today, we have the great honor and privilege to share one of our proudest moments in life together with our families and friends. Our polytechnic journey as RP students was certainly not easy. Remember the very first time, when we stepped into the school compound for orientation? We were all strangers to one another, and we felt foreign in a new school environment. However, through the activities and games in the orientation camp, it broke the ice and we all had fun.

After orientation, classes started and we met our classmates and facilitators for the first time. I remember we would always go to the canteen and buy breakfast as a class, and sometimes, we will help one another to buy if there was a lot of work to be done. I really like the spirit of helping each other in our school. Even though we barely knew one another initially, we had to learn to work together as a team using the Problem-Based Learning approach and solve the given problem for the day.

I remember, the first class I had in RP was A101 Science module. When the problem statement was shown on the screen, we were all at a loss about what we needed to do. The problem of the day was about blood types. A scenario was given that an earthquake had happened in Singapore and blood transfusions were needed for

multiple victims. Some of the blood transfusion worked and some didn't. We were then asked to solve and understand why this is so.

RP's PBL learning approach is something that we will never forget and there's a good reason why this is so. The RP-PBL system has groomed us to become more confident, creative and independent learners who are capable and ready to make a positive impact to our society. All these would certainly not be possible without the efforts of our professional, caring and passionate facilitators.

One example of such a facilitator that I can give is Dr Brandon Ooi, whom I am sure many of us are familiar with. He is famous for his mantra, 'Good, good, very good, very good, good'. He taught my class Immunology, and every week, he never failed to amuse us with his mantra and made learning for the class fun, yet effective. He helped us to understand difficult concepts and also pushed us to explore further than what was required. All these were done within a day's learning at a suitable pace, which was simply amazing! And let's not forget how his mantra 'Good, good, very good, very good, good' would always make a student feel more at ease and motivated to learn.

I am personally thankful to him and all of my other facilitators who have shaped and moulded me into the individual that I am today. I am sure that many of you also share my sentiments too. So right now, while we recall the precious memories of what our facilitators had done for us and how their teachings had inspired us, it is appropriate for us to pause at this juncture to thank all our facilitators with a round of applause for all the sacrifices and hard work that they have put in all these years.

Besides academic studies, RP also offers a variety of Interest Group's that adds much vibrancy to student life. Many of us found our own calling in the 100+ IG's that are offered and I found myself fortunate to be able to find my calling in the Service-Learning Club (SLC), an IG that promotes volunteerism, altruism and the spirit of helping local or international communities through our projects, workshops or sharing.

My CCA advisors, Sandelyn and Khloe are two people I respect most. Without them, as well as my other facilitators and SLC, I can't imagine where I will be. I am sure most of you will be able to understand how grateful I am feeling because, we all have people that impacted and touched our lives. RP has changed our lives in a positive way and I am really happy to be graduating with my friends and schoolmates today.

In fact, things were completely different four years ago. I was sitting in my former junior college principal's office with my mother in 2010. She was invited there because I didn't perform well in my studies and had to repeat another year. When the principal showed my mother my results, she broke down in tears. That was the first time I saw my mother cry. My heart ached badly. I knew I wasn't a bad student

at all. I was just unmotivated to learn. This is because I have a dream, and it is to pursue a career in the medical industry. However, that dream was seemingly crushed as I was not able to take Biology as one of my subjects at JC.

As I reflect on this journey from my junior college days to my time in Republic Polytechnic and finally here, right now, in this moment; I realise I have learnt a lesson that I wish to share with everyone here. As individuals, we all have dreams. We dream, because it gives us hope, it gives us something to fight for every day, it gives us a purpose, it makes us happy and it motivates us to be better.

Hence, we should continue to dream and to work towards fulfilling our dreams. I mentioned that I felt my dream was crushed in my junior college days. I realised that it was not true at all. I realised I was the one who refused to see that my dream was always there, waiting for me to realise it. I had this mentality that in order to pursue a medical course and career, I need to go to a junior college, take Biology as one of my subjects and score very well.

When that path closed its doors on me, I almost gave up. When I finally took up the courage to transfer from my JC to the Diploma in Biomedical Sciences at RP, I finally begin to see another route in fulfilling my dream.

As long as you have a dream, never give it up! Dreams do not get crushed and disappear. It's always a question of how bad you want to realise your dream. Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, once said "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." The road to our dreams isn't necessarily a straightforward one. It can be a road full of sharp turns and steep slopes, occasionally, you may even face obstacles along the way, but do not let that get you down. Learn from these incidents and obstacles.

Today, after graduating with my diploma in Biomedical Sciences, I will now be able to pursue possible avenues which will take me closer towards my dream career in the medical sector. And so, I encourage all of you, who have big dreams and want it to happen, to not hesitate, be courageous to explore all options and be open to any opportunities that lie ahead of us.

After today, our ships will sail in different directions and we will soon need to make major decisions like which University to go to? Which career path to take? And for the guys, who are enlisting in the army for National Service soon, we are probably overwhelmed by the change from "Ah boys to Men". Sometimes all these decisions and sudden changes can get a little bit overwhelming especially when you don't know what lies ahead. Nevertheless, we should not panic, but instead, take our time, explore options, and find out what you like to do. And when you finally find your

passion and dream, go ahead courageously to pursue it. Remember to always try one more time, to not give up and believe that you can do it.

At this point, I would like to take a moment to thank the teammates and friends that I have come across these past 3 years, my final year project team in particular, my parents and my grandparents for their everlasting support, the awesome people I met in Service-Learning Club, my inspiring advisors, Sandelyn, Khloe, Sharonne, my facilitators and finally RP, for giving me the best learning experience ever!

On a final note, I would like to end my speech with a quote by Winston Churchill, ex-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, where he once said,

'Success is not final,
Failure is not fatal,
It is the courage and thought to continue that counts'

With that, congratulations to all graduates of 2014! All the best to all our futures! And always remember, it's the courage and thought to continue that counts. Thank you.