

## **AGU RECTOR'S SPEECH ON VIETNAMESE TEACHERS' DAY**

**20/11/2018**

*Good morning all the distinguished guests, delegates, respectful former teachers, lecturers, graduate students, and university students.*

November has come. In harmony with the beats of millions of Vietnamese people's hearts, all the teachers and students of An Giang University are also in the mood of excitement about welcoming a very special day about which each one of us has always remembered. It is the Tet of Vietnamese Teachers. This is the prime reason why we are here today to show our great respect for our beloved teachers, who our communities affectionately call by a lovely name as "the soul artists" in the sky of culture. With the solemn, warm, and emotional atmosphere of Vietnamese Teachers' Day, I hereby, on behalf of Communist Party Commission and Board of Rectors of An Giang University, welcome all of you and extend my best wishes to all our distinguished delegates and honorable guests, especially to the respectful retired teachers and to all the in-service ones who have been making great contributions to the career of "planting humans" at An Giang University.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since ancient times, humans have realized the significance of education. In the East, in the 6th century B.C., Confucius (551 – 479 BC) stated that "Education is the key to develop the economy", whereas in the East, about a century later (c. 469 B.C.), Philosopher Socrates said that "Education is to enable people to find themselves." Between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance and the Early Modern Times, in the West, Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), a German doctor, asserted that "Development of schools leads to development of everything." About a century later, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716), a German mathematician and philosopher of nature, declared that "Make me the master of education, and I will undertake to change the world." Sharing the same viewpoint as Leibniz's, Former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, used to claim, "Education is the most powerful weapon that one can use to change the world."

In Vietnam, during the early modern times, Emperor Quang Trung Nguyễn Huệ (1753 - 1792), right after his Coronation and his victory over the Manchu army, immediately wished to realize one of his life ambitions which was to build up an innovative national education on purpose of training or nurturing the talented or scholars to make a mighty country. Quang Trung soon invited Nguyễn Thiếp (also known as La Sơn phu tử,

i.e. Professor of La Son) and many Bắc Hà scholars like Ngô Thì Nhậm and Trần Văn Kỷ to draft *Chiếu Lập học* (i.e. the decree formulating education), in which he stated that “...if one wishes to construct the country, it is, first and foremost, essential to develop education. If one wishes to govern the country, it is essential to respectfully employ the talented.” and that “education chooses the excellent from all over the country, enhancing their knowledge, and then carefully selects the elites - that is, it is these talented people who are the *chi* or *qi* of a nation; talented people are present in the public nationwide, but not in only certain social classes; how a country would become and whether a country would be strong or weak depends on the operating education system.” This decree clearly showed the profound awareness of the talented Emperor Quang Trung. In modern times, President Hồ Chí Minh also had a distance vision of education and the role of teachers. After the August Revolution in 1945, Uncle Hồ proposed to promote education to a national policy.

Highly aware of the significance of education and the teaching career, our government first celebrated the Vietnamese Teachers’ Day on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1958, and specially later on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, the Council of Ministers issued the Decision (No. 167/HĐBT) about officially recognizing the 20<sup>th</sup> of November as the Vietnamese Teachers’ Day. Since then, November 20<sup>th</sup> has officially become an important annual milestone celebrated in every part of our country with the aim of honoring all the teachers as well as the national education system.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is worthy that the tradition of “the appreciation of teachers” has been long established among our Vietnamese people. Numerous famous sayings about this include “Teaching us one word is our teacher; teaching us half a word is still a teacher.”, “Teaching is the noblest career.”, or “On the first day of the Lunar New Year is the Tet of Father; the second is of Mother, and the third is of Teachers.” Such ideas have become our human philosophies, and they are considered as moral principles, which are engraved on the Vietnamese people’s heart and becomes the beauty and the traditional cultural values of our Vietnamese people. I strongly believe that regardless of a market economy, where the world integration is taking place extensively and the society is changing dramatically, these values and beauties are always everlasting to Vietnamese people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the last academic year (2017 – 2018), our university continued to overcome many difficulties and had many remarkable accomplishments, a few of which I would like to pinpoint today as follows:

- *The Communist Party of our university* has always performed well its leading role. Particularly, three new members has been nominated and elected into the Commission, another into the Permanent Commission; 32 party cells were either reorganized or established, with the total number of 666 members; 02 Departments, 01 Faculty, and 02 Centers were newly established; the academic quality of our staff continued to improve: in more detail, in the last academic year our university had 01 more Associate Professor, 24 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 02 new four-year training programs and another new graduate program; 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 06 more memoranda with universities from the U.S., Australia, Latvia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines; receiving foreign lecturers from Anywhere and Everywhere (the U.S.), University of Queensland (Australia); we also welcomed more than 40 members of the International Youth Fellowship (South Korea), University of Andrews (the U.S.) 119 lecturers or students from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, University of Yuhan (Korea), Andalas University (Indonesia), Australian National University, HZ Applied Science University to do their internship or

realize such programs as VN Field School or Community Service Programs. 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”; 01 collective and 50 individuals were awarded by the Provincial People’s Committee for their best performances in a row of 2 years; 06 units in our university were recognized as “Excellent staff” of the academic year 2017-2018; 06 individuals were recognized as “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:* 93 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 Thoại Ngọc Hầu High School for the Gifted, one the second highest score achiever into PPS (including 01 specializing in Literature, 01 in English, 01 in Information Technology, 01 into PPS, and 01 in Chemistry respectively) and another who was among the top five highest score achiever into Long Xuyên 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;

It can be said that all these accomplishments were made by the great contributions of all our lecturers and students to our university in the past year. Today, on this special occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Board of Rectors of An Giang University, to thank all the individuals and organizations in Vietnam, and specially, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the individuals and organizations from different countries in the world, though some of them are not present here today, who have greatly contributed to the development of our university so far.

Dear teachers,

Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani girl and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate at the age of nearly 18, firmly declared that “Let us remember: one book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world.” This quote proved the power of teachers and education. Long before, Francis Bacon, an English philosopher, also claimed that “Knowledge is power.” Power of our beloved teachers is power of the AGU’s image. Following traditions of previous generations, we should be truly aware of it, strive to be well-qualified teachers and be “... like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others.” The Rector Board of An Giang University hope that our university teachers always continue upgrading expertise knowledge, professional skills, teachers’ moral values to devote to education. It means that teachers have to consider regular innovation and creativity as individual cultures to establish collective cultures, which contributes to strengths of An Giang University and makes it become one of the notable universities in this region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Former Minister Wayne Muller, who graduated from Harvard Divinity School, once said that everyone usually complained to him that “I’m busy” or “I’m too busy”. Experiencing this point, he wrote in an inspiring book *Sabbath* that “...as if our exhaustion were a trophy, our ability to withstand stress a mark of real character. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whiz through our obligations without time for a single, mindful breath, this has become the model of a successful life.” There was a long period of time when many people used to think that it would be fine if they basically went to their workplaces, finish their assigned tasks, and follow the principles. Right here at our university, I frequently hear

lecturers or students say sentences like “I’m too busy”, “I have to finish CDIO syllabi or write external assessment reports”, or “I don’t have enough time to finish my scientific research.” Many students in Pedagogical Practice School told me that “I have to learn all mornings and afternoons.” or “I have no time for practicing careers, participating in extracurricular activities or improving soft skills. Actually, we feel sympathetic for teachers, students on this point. However, let us remember that the world always keeps moving, so how can we stand still? Life doesn’t wait for anyone when it moves forward, so how do we have to stop? In other words, we had better ponder that moving is a principle and we had better know how to renew ourselves.

Ladies and gentlemen:

The English Former Prime Minister Ethel Churchill said that “The destinies of the future tie in judicious education; an education that must be universal, to be beneficial.” Thus, many countries constantly make great efforts to invest in educational development and consider teaching as a distinctive career. Recently, we have heard a lot about the Industrial Revolution 4.0, and probably we have not completely imagined how it works or what its impacts are. But it is a reality and this reality is taking place so rapidly, which makes enormous changes in all fields, even leads to shifts in traditional values and messes values in our lives up. We have no choice but adapt to it and move forward. Realizing this point, the Qualcomm Incorporated - a leading global semiconductor company in U.S - uses “Life changes when everyone is connected/ Life changes when everything is connected” as its slogan.

To lecturers and students in An Giang University, the question is “What can we do in this Revolution?”. After having written *The Flat World*, Thomas L. Friedman, an American author who has won the Pulitzer Prize three times, the New York Times, and many prizes for books in America, wrote the ambitious book *Thank you for being late*. In this book, he analyses personal aspects of the Age of Accelerations further that “Let’s get one thing straight, the robots are not destined to take all the jobs. That only happens if we let them, if we don’t accelerate innovations in the labor, education, and start-up realms, and if we don’t reimagine the whole conveyor belt from primary education to work to lifelong learning.” I suppose that this answer is an excellent one for us, especially for Vietnamese Education.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Prior to ending this speech, I would like to mention the saying of Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941), the first Asian winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. That reads “Invest in a man we have a good husband; invest in a woman we have a good family; invest in a teacher we have a good generation.” We undertake educational mission. Investing in teaching and learning is investing in our future.

On the 36th Anniversary of Vietnamese Teachers’ Day, on behalf of An Giang University, I sincerely feel grateful to Ministry of Education and Training, National University Ho Chi Minh City, Provincial Commission, People’s Assembly, People’s Committee, for your deep concerns and directions. I would also like to thank for the helps and supports of leaders of all unions and provincial departments, of Long Xuyên City and other districts and towns, of individuals and businesses in helping us with fulfilling the mission of “planting humans” for the last 19 years. I hope that our university will receive further concerns, directions and valuable helps of all visionary leaders.

May our former teachers, lecturers, graduate students, and university students enjoy a meaningful happy day.

May all the distinguished guests, delegates be healthy, happy, and prosperous.

Thank you very much.

**Assoc. Prof. Vo Van Thang,  
Member of Provincial Commission,  
Secretary of Communist Party,  
Rector of An Giang University**