



## World Food Prize laureate is 47th Commencement Exercises speaker

**SEED INDUSTRY PIONEER.** Dr. Simon Groot will be conferred the Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, by the University of the Philippines for his contribution to the improvement of farmers' livelihood through pioneering localized vegetable breeding and seed production in Southeast Asia (Photo courtesy of East-West Seed, Inc.)

East-West Seed, Inc. founder Simon N. Groot, who has been named by the World Food Prize Foundation as the 2019 World Food Prize laureate, will grace the 47th UPLB Commencement Exercises as guest speaker.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and President of the World Food Prize Foundation Kenneth M. Quinn announced Dr. Groot as the recipient of the prestigious "Nobel Prize for Food" on June 10, 2019.

The University of the Philippines will also confer the Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, upon Dr. Groot in a ceremony during the commencement program. UP confers the honorary doctorate upon individuals for their meritorious and outstanding achievements toward the advancement of a field and for their contributions to the institution and society.

The UP Board of Regents approved the award to Dr. Groot at its 1344th meeting on April 29, 2019. UP President Danilo

L. Concepcion informed Dr. Groot of this award in an official correspondence dated May 10, 2019 where he expressed UP's recognition of his contribution to agriculture.

"The university has taken special note of your outstanding accomplishments, which has contributed significantly to the improvement of farmers' livelihood and the availability of nutritious and affordable vegetables to Filipino consumers," President Concepcion said.

At the commencement ceremony on June 22 at the DL Umali Freedom Park, 2,419 candidates for graduation will officially receive their degrees: 2,048 for their bachelor's degree; 285 for their master's degree; and 73 for their doctorate. Meanwhile, 13 will earn their Certificate in Forestry.

Leading the UPLB Class 2019 is its valedictorian and lone *summa cum laude*, Helbert A. Paat, BS Applied Mathematics.

Joining Paat in the honors circle are 22 *magna cum laude* and 201 *cum laude* graduates.

Dr. Groot, who was born in 1934 in Enkhuizen town, The Netherlands, is a sixth-generation seedsman. His great-great-great grandfather pioneered the seed business in the 1800s, which was soon named as Sluis & Groot. The family enterprise was passed on to succeeding generations, and it was his father who convinced him to join the company in 1958.

With a degree in business economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Dr. Groot learned more about the seed industry at Vaughan's Seed Company in Chicago, USA, at a time when the sector was opening up to sophisticated plant breeding programs.

In his stint at Sluis & Groot, holding important positions such as marketing manager until it was sold to another company in 1981, he became receptive to the developments in the seed industry.

In 1982, he established the East-West Seed in Lipa City, Batangas, which pioneered localized vegetable breeding and seed production in Southeast Asia. Joining him in this milestone was Benito Domingo, a Filipino seed trader.

The World Food Prize acknowledged how the company's affordable packages of high-quality vegetable seeds and its training programs have helped smallholder farmers. "Using East-West's seeds multiplied this increase in farmers' income both by yielding more and growing higher quality produce that commanded a premium market price."

Today, East-West Seed serves 18 million farmers around the world. The company is present in seven countries, including the Philippines, and has headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand. (Mark Jayson E. Gloria, with information from [ph.eastwestseed.com](http://ph.eastwestseed.com) and *The World Food Prize*)

## GS hooding speaker is a Thai uni top executive

The top official of a Thai university who earned his doctorate from UPLB is this year's guest of honor at the Hooding and Recognition Ceremonies of the Graduate School (GS) on June 21, 8:00 AM, at the DL Umali Freedom Park.

Dr. Weerapon Thongma, Acting President of Maejo University, will speak before 358 students who will be recognized prior to officially earning their graduate degrees on June 22.

Of this, 73 candidates for graduation will receive the academic regalia symbolizing their completion of the Doctor of Philosophy, and the remaining 285, their master's degrees. Top GS graduates will also be recognized during the program.

Dr. Thongma finished his PhD Extension Education from UPLB in

2001 as a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholar. He teaches tourism development at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He is an expert in sustainable tourism management, agrotourism, tourism strategic planning, and community development.

He is the former president of the Asian Tourism Management Association and the current president of the Asian Association of Agricultural Colleges and Universities.

Aside from being an associate professor at Maejo University, Dr. Thongma is an honorary professor at Taiwan's National Chin-Yi University in 2016 and Vanung University in 2018. (Mark Jayson E. Gloria)



An architect's perspective of the Graduate School International Student and Cultural Center, one of the infrastructure projects in UPLB. Read "UPLB builds more learning and research facilities" on p. 4 to know more of them.





## ‘Acads does not define self-worth’ – Class 2019 *summa cum laude*

When Helbert Paat passed the UPCAT, he set a family milestone. Neither of his parents earned a college degree. Yet there he was, far from Cagayan, going where both had not gone before.

“For the first few years of my stay in the university, I was really driven by that reality,” he said. While his original plan was to pursue accountancy in UP Diliman – Helbert loved math even as a kid – his

UPCAT scores qualified him for UPLB’s BS Applied Mathematics program. Soon, he learned that he also passed the scholarship exam of the Department of Science and Technology.

Their finances clinched the decision for him. It was a slight setback to his original plan, but he was intent on making the most of it. As soon as he entered the university, he set his short- and long-term goals: to become a University Scholar for that semester, and to graduate *summa cum laude*.

Helbert said that he wrote down these goals without really thinking he would make it. Instead, he just strived hard and did his best. “I saw na *naging* real siya, ‘*yung pagiging* University Scholar, and the *summa cum laude* standing. Above 1.20 every sem ‘*yung* GWA (general weighted average) ko for the first four semesters, and I could not believe it,” he said.

He continued to work hard and began to love his course. And after finding a family in the UPLB Actuarial Science Society and the Lakas Angkan Youth Fellowship, he also started to enjoy his studies more and learned to not be too pressured to get high grades.

“Before, I had all these feelings of insecurity, of lack of self-worth. Whenever I scored low on my exams,

sometimes I thought it defined my worth. But when I came to know God, everything changed,” said Helbert.

“Now I always tell people, for me my ‘acads’ is very important, but it’s not my ‘acads’ that defines my worth.”

It is his passion for learning that has led him to achieve excellence. According to Director Jerry R. Yapo of the Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts and this year’s commencement rites director, “I have never met somebody as passionate as he is in learning not only mathematics, but also in using his discipline’s lens(es) in analyzing everyday phenomena. That I find a quality quite rare among students these days.”

Today, Helbert recognizes the far greater lesson that he had, that is the process of learning. “That’s what math taught me,” he said. “[I learned that] if you will just persevere, if you will just do your best, if you will just try and try to solve problems, over and over again, you can excel.”

At the 2019 Commencement Exercises, Helbert’s parents will be coming to UPLB for the first time. They may have not experienced going to college, but on that day, they will witness their son being recognized as a *summa cum laude* of the country’s national university and valedictorian of UPLB Class 2019. (Jessa Jael S. Arana)

## National Academy of Science and Technology Awardees



**Dr. Emil Q. Javier**  
National Scientist



**Dr. Rex Victor O. Cruz**  
NAST Academician



**Dr. Juan M. Pulhin**  
NAST Academician



**Dr. Rico C. Ancog**  
Outstanding Young Scientist



**Dr. Patricia Ann J. Sanchez**  
Outstanding Young Scientist



**Dr. Darwin B. Putungan**  
Winner, Talent Search for Young Scientists



**Khris June L. Callano, Dr. Merlyn S. Mendioro, & Visitacion C. Huelgas**  
Recipients, Outstanding Scientific Paper Award

## New UPLB Professors Emeriti



**Dr. Felino P. Lansigan**



**Dr. Agnes C. Rola**



## Stories of Grit & Hope



### Sam Timbreza – fighter, survivor

The university is akin to a battlefield with everyone facing his or her own ordeals that only vary in magnitude or dimension, but all serving to test a person's strength and character.

In UPLB, there is one survivor who has defied the challenges thrown at her, and now she is ready to claim her victory at UPLB's 47th Commencement Exercises.

Even before entering UPLB, Samantha Johanna T. Timbreza had already been fighting her own battle. In second year high school, Sam was diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease that caused her to temporarily stop studying.

As if her situation was not enough, she went through depression and her faith was challenged. Her family struggled financially to sustain her health expenses, which included chemotherapy sessions.

The young fighter did not give up, and soon, she saw a silver lining: she was declared on remission. Fired up by a renewed hope and enthusiasm, Sam returned to finish high school, and took the UP College Admission Test (UPCAT) at the age of 22.

Her hopes, however, were doused when she found out that she did not pass the exam. But she had not gone through life's challenges and conquered them in order to be defeated again.

She held on and took advantage of a golden opportunity awaiting her when she found out that her UPCAT scores allowed her to apply for reconsideration. She was waitlisted for BS Development Communication, and she made sure not to waste the second chance.

Things became even better when she was selected as a scholar of the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR). The scholarship covered her tuition fees and other major school expenses.

Academic life was not necessarily difficult for Sam because she loved studying. She enjoyed quizzes and exams. While her health condition prevented her from joining student organizations, she cultivated deep friendships with her classmates.

When her kidneys failed during her third year in the university, it was these friends who raised money to help fund her dialysis sessions.

Sure, it was another battle for Sam, but she chose to be strong. Today, after five and a half years of studying, of fighting seemingly insurmountable battles, and of overpowering her weaknesses, Sam will receive her university degree as the lone *magna cum laude* and the valedictorian of the College of Development Communication Class 2019.

Sam was a figure of hope and survival during an event of the Office of Student Affairs on June 13, when graduating scholars and their benefactors, including Sam and DA-BAR, were recognized.

In her testimonial speech, Sam shared her story to her fellow scholars, who like her, have survived their own battles.

"I want you to know that the only reason I stand here before you—happy, breathing, alive—is because there is a God who moves in mysterious ways," she said.

"I like to think that God is the first 'development communicator.' He would never impose what He thinks is good for you, because He values your 'participation' and 'agency' more," she continued.

"By having faith—not only in Him, it could be faith in yourself, in your family, in the Filipino people—grace can flow. Faith is the channel of grace," Sam concluded.

The battle continues for Sam. She has entered the workforce and in between her busy schedule as a development worker, Sam undergoes dialysis.

Sam would like to one day sponsor scholars as her way to pay forward, to be of help to the next generation of students who will be facing their own battles in the university. (*KEAraguas with excerpts from Sam Timbreza's Testimonial Speech. Photo credit: Edgar Bagasol, Jr*)



### Conquering a 13-year journey to Sablay

His is a story that became viral recently because it spoke of victory over all conceivable roadblocks to a dream he nurtured for 13 long years. It speaks of grit and determination, of resilience and perseverance, of picking himself up when all seemed lost, and of a community that helped him along the way.

It began in 2005, when Thomas John "TJ" Tenedero, then a 13-year-old Grade 5 student and already dreaming of finishing college to take his family out of poverty, happened to briefly stay at a family friend's house in Grove, near the UPLB Main Gate.

The family friend told him that the young people garbed in ordinary street clothes—shorts, t-shirts, and rubber slippers—busily going about their way were UPLB students. This friend told him that he could one day go to college in UPLB and avail himself of free tuition fees for students from low-income families.

This fired up his dream to take his family out of the neighborhood beside the railroad tracks where they lived, and free his father of the drudgery of trading in scraps for a living. TJ put all his efforts into getting into UPLB, from choosing his high school, enrolling in a reputable review center for college entrance exams, and to his choice of a course in UP. Getting into UPLB proved to be the easier part, and staying, a long journey and a difficult challenge that he is now proud to have conquered.

At each juncture, he encountered roadblocks and had to reassess his options when his best plans did not pan out, speaking of his resiliency, grit, and determination. When he did not pass the UPCAT in 2010 for his course of choice, rather than being disheartened, he picked himself up and applied for reconsideration.

He was accepted in the BS Agricultural Economics program, struggled through it for eight years, and at times was tempted to give up after he repeatedly failed in a few prerequisite subjects that set back his schedule for taking advanced subjects. Financial constraints aggravated his situation, too. Moreover,

seeing his contemporaries graduating and leaving him behind made him feel despondent and all alone. All these together became a potent brew that caused him mental issues that was diagnosed to be a bipolar disorder.

These challenges could have weakened his resolve to earn his degree in UP. However, TJ always did his best to get himself out of the rut. He was able to avail himself of a full tuition discount, and applied and was accepted as a student assistant which provided some financial relief for him.

TJ also found a caring UPLB community in the University Housing Office, the UP Research, Extension, and Professional Staff, and a church group that gave out food stubs that allowed needy students to avail themselves of free food at canteens in UPLB. He also joined open *tambayan* activities of student organizations where free food was distributed to participants. He also found relief when UPLB authorities allowed him to postpone the payment of his loan under the Student Loan Board.

Gratitude in these little blessings and the people who supported him helped keep TJ going. He continued to go to his classes and did not drop a single subject even when he knew he was going to fail, reasoning that learning the lessons would help make him pass the subject the next time he takes them.

On June 22, 13 years after what seemed a pipe dream, TJ will formally earn the right to wear the UP *Sablay*. He is now on his first job and from here, he plans to pursue his passion for writing, the reason why he chose a writing course when he took the UPCAT but missed his target. He sees it not as a setback but a way by which he is being equipped to still pursue writing using the knowledge he gained as a graduate of BS Agricultural Economics.

Life's difficulties may have slowed TJ down, but they will never stop him from attaining his dreams. (*Jessa Jael S. Arana*)



## Top MS, PhD grads are both from ag eng'g

Two agricultural engineering scholars have emerged as this year's top graduates at the master's and doctorate levels.

Romel A. Arrobang, MS Agricultural Engineering, and Reynold M. Caoili, PhD Agricultural Engineering, will receive the Academic Excellence Awards for garnering the highest General Weighted Average (GWA) among 358 candidates for graduation at the postgraduate level.

The two will receive their awards during the GS Hooding and Recognition Ceremonies on June 21 at the DL Umali Freedom Park, alongside nine others who will be given Academic Achievement Awards for making it to the top five of their respective postgraduate levels based on GWA.

Following Arrobang at the master's level are Jonathan Jaime G. Guerrero (MS Plant Pathology), Blessy Hanna T. Malinao (MS

Animal Science), Job Jonas C. Ruzcal (MS Agricultural Engineering), Rhea Dela Cruz Mallari (MS Agricultural Chemistry), and Angeleigh Rose T. Cirunay (MS Food Science).

Meanwhile, ranking next to Caoili at the PhD level are Trina Leah T. Mendoza and Chrysl Avegeil Noble Vallejo (both PhD Development Communication), and Gerald M. Salas and Sherryl L. Paz (both PhD Environmental Science).

The Leadership Award and the Service Award will be given to Dan Leo Z. Diona, MS Economics, and Mel Chrisel A. Sales, PhD Soil Science, respectively.

This year, Vietnam has the most number of graduating foreign students at the postgraduate level. (*KEAraguas*)



CAOILI



ARROBANG



Architects' perspectives of (L-R) the Nanoscience and Technology Center, the Office of the University Registrar and communal classrooms, the Philippine National Collection of Microorganisms, and the Philippine Genome Center.

## UPLB builds more learning and research facilities

Have you noticed new buildings and other infrastructure being built in the UPLB campus? And old buildings getting makeovers that go beyond a splash of new paint? These are all part of UPLB's initiative to capacitate research and instruction by providing conducive venues for learning and innovation.

A few minutes upon taking a left turn from the UPLB Main Gate on Ela Avenue, you will see a new vehicular bridge (PhP 67M) connecting both sides of Molawin Creek. Already nearing completion, it will allow motorists to go directly from Ela Avenue to the Engineering Complex on Pili Drive.

The bridge is funded under the 2016 General Appropriations Act and implemented by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Along with it are two additional roads parallel to Pili Drive that should ease up traffic in the area and provide an exclusive thoroughfare for bicyclists. Another road is under construction up ahead from IPB Road that will open up access to UPLB from FT San Luis Avenue in Bay town.

Farther down south, UPLB is also constructing the two-storey Senior High School building (PhP 24M) at its teaching laboratory, the UP Rural High School (UPRHS).

### NEW INFRA AT THE MAIN CAMPUS

If you make a turnaround from UPRHS and go back to the campus, you will soon see a building fast taking shape on the left side of the T-junction at Pili Drive and Aglibut Avenue. This is going to be the future home of the Institute of Weed Science, Entomology, and Plant Pathology (PhP 100M).

Driving down towards where Aglibut Avenue and Dawis Road converge, you will see the makings of the new Landscape Horticulture Knowledge Center Building (PhP 25M) near the Edible Garden. Across the road next to the University Police Force headquarters is another new building which will house the Orchid Nursery Laboratory (PhP 30.4M).

As you work your way toward the DL Umali Freedom Park, you will see the new Technology Hub and One-Stop Shop of UPLB (PhP 7.2M) right next to Baker Hall. This will soon become a venue for innovators and entrepreneurs to meet and create new ideas for technology commercialization.

Right at the back of the Graduate School (GS), on the left side of the incline going to the Forestry campus is the Graduate School International Student and Cultural Center (PhP 69.7M), which is also nearing

completion. This is going to be the new home of the GS.

Then, traversing the Molawin bridge and going up the Gapud Road incline, you will see on the left side before reaching UPCO housing the beginnings of the new Graduate School Dormitory (PhP 100M). Once completed, it will house up to 200 students and will have a student lounge, an exhibit gallery, and a bookstore.

### MORE STRUCTURES TO COME

Other major structures will soon be appearing on the campus map with more buildings that are now in various stages of design and procurement.

One is the Office of the University Registrar and Communal Classrooms building (PhP 83M). It will be located on the corner of Ela and Sandoval Avenues across Catalan Compound. Through this new communal space, the UPLB administration aims to increase the absorptive capacity of UPLB and address the demands of the growing student population.

Two 4-storey buildings of the College of Economics and Management (CEM) are also going to begin construction soon. The design of the Economics and Management Studies Center (PhP 90M)

has been finalized and is now in the bidding phase while the plans and design for the CEM Multipurpose Building (Agricultural and Economic Development Studies Center) (PhP 100M) are currently being drawn.

UPLB is also improving and adding more facilities for its research centers. It has slated at least ten projects that are intended to accommodate offices and research facilities.

Among these are the UPLB Nanoscience and Technology Facility (PhP 52M), a new National Plant Genetic Resources Laboratory (PhP 60M), the Philippine Center for Tropical Forest Science Building (PhP 32M), and the rehabilitation and extension of the Agriculture and Bioprocess Division Building (PhP 22.26M), all of which already have final designs as of June 2019.

UPLB's road networks will also have a major makeover with a construction project (PhP 250M) headed by the DPWH. Dr. Marish Madlangbayan, vice chancellor for planning and development, said that the project will prioritize replacing damaged and degraded roads in the campus.

With these upcoming and on-going changes, there is much to look forward to, especially for the future scholars who will enter through UPLB's gates. (*Jessa Jael S. Arana*)

## BOARD EXAM RESULTS



**Electrical Engineers**  
April 2019  
• 33 out of 33  
• **100% Passing Rate**  
• 6 topnotchers  
(including First Placer)  
• Top performing school



**Civil Engineers**  
May 2019  
• 24 out of 24  
• **100% Passing Rate**



**Teachers (Secondary and Elementary)**  
March 2019  
• 43 out of 43  
• **100% Passing Rate**  
• 1 topnotcher (Secondary Level)



**Environmental Planners**  
June 2019  
• 106 out of 135  
• 1 topnotcher (First Placer)



**Chemical Engineers**  
May 2019  
• 29 out of 48  
• 2 topnotchers