Thank you for the warm welcome. Before starting, I would like to acknowledge everyone who made it possible for me to be on the podium today. I would like to thank my parents — whom I bet can’t wait to turn my room into an office; the teachers; school staff; and, above all, my classmates.

Members of the Class of 2015, I have to admit that I haven’t felt these last few days the same way as most of you have. Granted, I took part in the celebrations, sang with you, and shared the happiness of never doing homework again. Yet, while most of you either laughed out or cried your eyes out, I was actually quite afraid. After all, what could someone feel when he realized that 14 years of his life have suddenly come to a much anticipated (as well as much feared) end? What would you feel if all that you considered constant in your life were to disappear from one day to another?

It was with this unanticipated vulnerability that I asked myself for the first time: What did the Class of 2015 give to me? What did I, in these 14 years, learned from them? What useful abilities did they teach me? And even though we might not always be known for the best reasons, I realized that I was asking myself all the wrong questions. Who am I, after all, to weigh my years at ASA only through material aspects, or impersonal transactions, or learned skills?

It was with this in mind that, when writing this speech, I decided to ask myself “Who did the class of 2015 make me become”, rather than “What did I get from the class of 2015”. And before Mr. Ryan kills me because of my bad syntax, let me explain. A philosopher (I’m sure one of many we learned about — or at least tried to— in philosophy class) said that we are nothing more than pieces, mere reflections of the things we experience. It is with this in mind that I ask my classmates: Who are we thanks to the Class of 2015? Who would we be without Gloria’s constant cheers, Keko’s jokes, Joaquin’s goals, Cere’s randomness, or the cheesecakes that mysteriously arrived at the end of each quarter? Who would we be without our apparent aimlessness, our agreements and disagreements? After reflecting on all these questions, I realized that the class of
2015, whether we want it or not; for better or for worse, is an inherent part of the adults we have become and strive to be.

When I found out I was going to be valedictorian, I, of course, did not have the slightest idea of what a valediction was. After some research, however, I realized that I was meant to write a farewell speech, some words of good-bye. Yet how can I say farewell, knowing that we are here to welcome us into wherever our destinies may take us?

Honestly, I’m not here to tell you that we will all be successful, or that we are the future of this country (let alone the future of the world). What I can, however, tell everyone, is this: whether you are well off (or not so much), remember that life is too short for twitter wars or reality shows. It’s too short for spending entire afternoons with your Xbox on your couch. You got a bad grade? Get over it. Your team lost the championship? Get over it! Someone tagged you on a photo you look hideous in? Get over it. We might not all get to fulfill all our aspirations, but there is a thing we can all be sure of: these 14 years have not only given us small pleasures or temporary joys, they have made us classmates for the rest of our lives. No matter if we live in here, China, the US, Abu Dhabi, or any other bizarre place in the world, we can most certainly be sure that we will forever have those connections, those inside jokes, those afternoons in the mangos. So, what I finally ask of you, classmates, is that wherever fate may lead us, never be afraid to show who you truly are: Members of the Class of 2015. Thank you.