Experts

Welcome, Young Engineers

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“Werde, der du bist.” (Become who you are.) The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that line more than a century ago, and it still isn’t a bad place to begin a welcome speech.

Welcome, young engineers.

Today you’ve arrived at the start of something. Maybe you came with a suitcase, a laptop, a stack of forms, and a parent trying very hard not to cry in public. Maybe you came confident, or doubting yourself a little. Honestly, most people arrive carrying some of both.

So let me get the important part out of the way first: you don’t have to have everything figured out today. You don’t need to know every building, every lecturer’s name, or what you’ll become by graduation. What you need is smaller: the courage to start, the humility to learn, and the willingness to take the next reasonable step.

A university isn’t a place you arrive at already finished. It shapes you, slowly, through lectures, labs, friendships, and disappointments. Education isn’t information piling up in your head; it’s judgment and discipline being built, often without you noticing.

You aren’t here just to collect grades or a title after your name. You’re here to become engineers who think clearly, design responsibly, and work well with other people. The machines you build might be powerful one day; the systems you create might touch thousands of lives. But the most important thing you’ll build here isn’t a bridge or a piece of code.

It’s yourself. Some of you already feel at home. Others are still finding their footing, and that’s fine too. The campus feels big, the timetable feels confusing, and everyone around you seems to come from somewhere different. You might miss home, or catch yourself comparing your beginning to someone else’s middle.

A lot of people who look confident are also still learning how to begin. A new place feels strange partly because it asks you to let go of old habits, and that discomfort is usually the start of standing on your own two feet.

The Stoic philosophers had something useful to say about starting over. Much of life sits outside our control, where we begin, what people think of us, the setbacks that show up uninvited. But how we respond is still ours to decide: whether a hard day meets panic or patience, whether criticism makes us bitter or a little wiser, whether a failed attempt becomes a permanent label or just useful information.

None of that means pretending problems are easy. It means asking, honestly, what’s the wisest thing I can do next? That one question, asked often enough, can quietly change a life.

You might not feel like UMPSA is home yet. That's normal. Belonging isn't handed to you on day one, it's built a little at a time: learn the paths between your lecture halls and the library, learn a few names, join a society, sit with the student who's eating alone.

A new place becomes familiar through small, repeated acts of courage, not one big leap. And please, don't try to walk through UMPSA by yourself.

The Prophet Muhammad ? once described believers as being like parts of a building, each one holding up the other. A wall doesn't stand because one brick is impressive on its own. It stands because every part is connected and leaning on something else for support. That's the kind of community worth building here.

Explain the topic your friend is struggling with. Share your notes instead of guarding them like a trade secret. Ask if someone's okay before you judge their effort. Let someone else's success be good news, not a threat to yours.

Most good deeds are small and unremarkable: explaining a formula one more time, sharing notes with a classmate who was sick, listening without cutting in, choosing not to pass along a rumour. Sometimes goodness is just noticing.

Achievement and compassion don't have to compete here. Let your intelligence make you more useful to people, not more full of yourself.

We also want UMPSA to be a place where people actually feel safe. That's not only about buildings and security patrols. A safe place is one where you can ask a question without being humiliated for it, raise a concern without being brushed off, and be treated with dignity even on your worst day. Nobody should have to suffer quietly just to belong, and building that kind of place is everyone's job: refusing to take part in bullying, respecting other people's boundaries, speaking up when you see harm being done.

If you're struggling, please don't mistake silence for strength. Talk to your lecturers, your advisers, the counsellors, or a friend you trust. You might think your problem is too small to mention, or that asking for help makes you look weak. It doesn't. Asking for help is responsible, not a failure.

A good engineer knows when a problem needs another set of hands, another opinion. The same is true in your personal life. You're not supposed to solve everything alone, and reaching out early is usually a sign of good judgment, not weakness.

There will be hard days here. A design will fail. Code will refuse to run at two in the morning for no obvious reason. A mark will disappoint you. When that happens, try not to say "I am a failure." Say instead, "this design needs revision." A failed attempt is something that happened, not who you are. Look at your method, ask for feedback, adjust, and go again. That's engineering. It's also just life.

Don't be afraid of being a beginner. Every person you'll admire here once struggled with something that later became second nature. You're not aiming for perfection, just to be a little more capable and generous than you were yesterday.

So, young engineers, come into UMPSA curious. Take thoughtful risks. Ask questions that actually matter to you. Make friends who'll push you to be wiser and kinder, not just friends who agree with you. Take care of your body, your mind, your faith, and your relationships. Don't let one exam or one

bad semester convince you of your own worth, because it was never measuring that in the first place.

When you meet someone struggling to find their place, and you will, remember how it felt to be new yourself. Make the doorway a little wider for them. Be the one who says, come sit with us. Explain something without making the other person feel small for not knowing it already.

One day you'll look back and realise UMPSA wasn't only where you studied engineering. It was where you learned to stand on your own feet while helping someone else find theirs. It was where you learned that knowledge without character can be dangerous, and that independence without responsibility quietly turns into isolation.

You came here to learn how things work. Along the way, you'll also learn how people work, how communities grow, and how your smallest choices can end up mattering to someone else. That's the bigger education, really.

May UMPSA become a place of discovery, discipline, friendship, safety, and purpose for every one of you. May you find lecturers who guide you, friends who strengthen you, and challenges that mature you. May you have the courage to begin, the patience to keep going, the humility to keep learning, and enough generosity left over to help the next person along the way.

Welcome to your new beginning. Welcome to a community that will challenge you and, more often than not, quietly grow alongside you. Welcome to the laboratories where ideas turn into experiments, and the friendships where strangers slowly turn into something like family. Welcome to the responsibility of becoming not just a skilled engineer, but a trustworthy human being.

Welcome, young engineers. Your journey starts now. And as you begin this new chapter, perhaps there is one piece of wisdom from our own tradition that captures what we hope you will carry with you from this place.

Seperti kata pantun Melayu lama:

Pisang emas dibawa belayar,

Masak sebiji di dalam peti;

Hutang emas boleh dibayar,

Hutang budi dibawa mati.

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