

Vice Chancellor - Opening Speech for Professor Dr Zamri Radzi's Special Lecture

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, salam sejahtera, and a very good afternoon.

Professor Dr Zamri Radzi, distinguished guests, colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

1. Let me start with the truth. Today is a happy day.
2. Not a protocol day. Not a committee day. Not one of those days where we sit in a hall and pretend the programme book is not too long.
3. Today is a happy day because we gather not just to hear a lecture, but to celebrate a man.
4. A good man. A kind man. A brilliant man. And, knowing Prof Zamri, probably a man who has already prepared enough material for three lectures, two books, and one museum exhibition.
5. That is Prof Zamri. When he does something, he does not do it halfway. If he gives advice, it becomes a lesson.
6. If he joins a meeting, it becomes a strategy. If he sees an empty land beside his house, he does not think, "Maybe I should plant grass." No. He thinks, "This should become a library." That, ladies and gentlemen, tells you everything.

7. Saya mengenali Prof Zamri lebih daripada 20 tahun. Dalam tempoh itu, saya mengenali beliau bukan sahaja sebagai seorang akademik, tetapi sebagai seorang sahabat, seorang rakan seperjalanan, dan seorang insan yang sangat ikhlas.
8. Saya juga mengenali keluarga beliau. Anak-anak beliau pun saya kenal. Dan yang menariknya, anak pertama kami mempunyai nama yang sama — Nadia. Nadia saya seorang doktor. Nadia Prof Zamri seorang pengamal farmasi.
9. I still remember when Prof Zamri found out that my Nadia was going to study medicine. He was happy. Really happy. And in true Prof Zamri style, he gave her a gift.
10. Not flowers. Not chocolates. Not a small motivational book with a beautiful cover. He gave her Dorland's Medical Dictionary. A very thick one.
11. Now, anyone who knows Dorland's knows this is not just a dictionary. This is a door stopper. This is gym equipment. This is a warning to every medical student: "Welcome to medicine. Life will not be easy."
12. But that is Prof Zamri. When he encourages you, he does it properly. When he supports you, he gives you something useful. And when he gives you a book, he makes sure your hand remembers it.
13. Saya juga selalu ke rumah Prof Zamri di Pinggiran Rahman Putra. Rumah beliau ada banyak buku. Banyak sungguh buku. Kalau kita masuk rumah beliau, kita rasa seperti masuk perpustakaan — cuma perpustakaan itu ada tuan rumah yang boleh memberi kuliah secara langsung.

14. Dan saya masih ingat tanah kosong di sebelah rumah beliau. Saya pernah tertarik dengan tanah itu. Kalau bukan kerana Prof Zamri sudah merancang tanah itu untuk perpustakaan pada masa depan, mungkin hari ini saya sudah menjadi jiran beliau.
15. But maybe it is better that I did not become his neighbour. Because if I lived next to Prof Zamri, every night might become a seminar. I would say, "Prof, just five minutes." Two hours later, we would still be discussing dentistry, history, books, students, poetry, leadership, accreditation, and the future of Malaysia. And our families would probably have to form a task force.
16. But that is the joy of knowing Prof Zamri. A conversation with him does not end where it begins. It travels. It expands. It teaches you something. Sometimes it gives you a headache — but a good headache. The kind that means your brain is working.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. The wonderful thing about Prof Zamri is that he is not only accomplished. He is interesting. Some people have long CVs, but very short stories. Prof Zamri has both a long CV and endless stories.
18. He is an orthodontist, a scientist, a researcher, an innovator, a former dean, a Deputy Vice Chancellor, a mentor, a volunteer, a lover of history, arts and literature, and probably one of the few people who can move from dental accreditation to poetry without changing facial expression.
19. He has served UM with distinction. He was Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry. He chaired the Malaysian Dental Deans' Council. He served as Deputy Dean of Development and Research.

20. He obtained specialist training from Leeds and further qualifications from the Royal Colleges in England, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ireland, before completing his doctorate at Oxford.
21. Now, that is impressive. But what is more impressive is this: after all that, he is still Prof Zamri. Still warm. Still friendly. Still approachable. Still able to sit with you, talk with you, laugh with you, and make you feel that you matter.
22. That is not always easy. Success can make some people distant. Recognition can make some people heavy. Titles can make some people forget how to smile.
23. But Prof Zamri carries all of it lightly. He has the credentials of a global scholar, but the heart of a teacher. And that is why we respect him.
24. He helped design the Orthodontic Specialist Programme at UM. He helped secure recognition for the orthodontic programme from leading Royal Colleges. He has examined, assessed and evaluated many candidates and institutions, nationally and internationally.
25. As Dean, he helped secure more than RM60 million for the redevelopment of the Faculty of Dentistry. He introduced the faculty song. He was also involved in developing mobile dental services, including a disabled-friendly bus and a two-storey mobile dental bus with advanced dental chairs.
26. Now, that is very Prof Zamri. Some deans build facilities. Some deans build programmes. Some deans build morale. Prof Zamri said: "Let us build all of them. And while we are at it, let us also have a song." That is leadership with rhythm.

27. As a clinician, he helped establish the University of Malaya Combined Cleft Palate Clinic, bringing different specialists together to provide better care for patients. He also established other combined clinics that continue to serve patients today.
28. That matters. Because at the end of the day, dentistry is not just about teeth. It is about confidence. It is about dignity. It is about being able to smile without fear. It is about giving people back something deeply human.
29. As a researcher and innovator, Prof Zamri has worked on biopolymers, automated bone expanders, tissue expanders and temporary tooth assemblies. He has secured more than RM9 million in research grants, holds several patents, and has won more than 30 medals, including gold medals at international research expositions in Nuremberg, Geneva, London and Pittsburgh.
30. That is world-class. But I think Prof Zamri would agree that research only becomes truly meaningful when it serves people. When it reduces pain. When it improves care. When it solves real problems. When it gives hope to those who need it.
31. That is the kind of academic excellence we should celebrate. Not excellence for decoration. Not excellence for applause. But excellence that works. Excellence that serves. Excellence that leaves something behind.
32. Dalam diri Prof Zamri, kita melihat satu gabungan yang jarang berlaku. Ilmunya tinggi, tetapi orangnya rendah hati. Pengalamannya luas, tetapi bicaranya mesra. Pencapaiannya besar, tetapi caranya tetap sederhana.
33. Beliau boleh berada di pentas dunia, tetapi tetap dekat dengan rakan-rakan. Beliau boleh memimpin institusi, tetapi tetap tidak lupa kepada pelajar.

34. Beliau boleh menerima pengiktirafan besar, tetapi tetap menjadi Prof Zamri yang kita kenal — tenang, ramah, dan sentiasa ada cerita untuk dikongsi.
35. And let me say this directly.UM is proud of Prof Zamri.
36. We are proud not only because he has brought recognition to the university. We are proud because he represents what this university should be.
37. Bright, but humble. Ambitious, but humane. Global, but grounded. Excellent, but generous.
38. In 2026, he was conferred an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons of England, joining other distinguished and eminent figures recognised by one of the most respected institutions in the profession.
39. That is a major honour.But today, Prof, we are not here only because the Royal College recognised you.We are here because your own university knows you.
40. We know the years. We know the effort. We know the service. We know the meetings that went too long. We know the committees that produced more committees. We know the students you guided. We know the faculty you strengthened. We know the colleagues you supported. We know the quiet work that does not always appear in the headlines, but keeps a university alive.
41. And that is why today matters.Because a university must know how to say thank you.Not only at the end of a career. Not only when someone retires. Not only when history has already been written. But while the person is still here. Still serving. Still teaching. Still laughing. Still giving us good stories.

Ladies and gentlemen,

42. A great university is not built by stone and glass alone. It is built by people. People who stay. People who serve. People who mentor. People who build things that others will inherit. People who plant trees under whose shade they may never sit.
43. Prof Zamri is one of those people. And perhaps, in his case, he may also build a library beside the tree.
44. So today, we celebrate him with gratitude. We celebrate the teacher. We celebrate the clinician. We celebrate the scientist. We celebrate the leader. We celebrate the friend.
45. Prof Zamri, bagi pihak Universiti Malaya, saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih. Terima kasih atas ilmu. Terima kasih atas khidmat. Terima kasih atas persahabatan. Terima kasih kerana menunjukkan bahawa kecemerlangan tidak perlu keras untuk dihormati, dan kepimpinan tidak perlu jauh untuk disegani.
46. You have shown us that a life of knowledge can also be a life of kindness. You have shown us that leadership can be serious without being stiff. You have shown us that success can be global without losing its human touch.
47. And you have shown us that even in a world that moves very fast, what still matters most are the things that last: friendship, service, integrity, and the courage to build.
48. So, ladies and gentlemen, let us begin this special lecture with warmth, with pride, and with appreciation. Let us listen not only to the lecture, but also to the life behind the lecture.
49. And let us honour a man who has given much, built much, taught much, and still — knowing Prof Zamri — probably has another few projects waiting after lunch.

With great pleasure, and with genuine affection, I welcome all of you to this special lecture in honour of our dear colleague, our respected leader, and our good friend —

Professor Dr Zamri Radzi.

Thank you.