

**“Preserving the Honor of the ‘Honoris Causa’:  
Revisiting the Guidelines on the Conferment of Honorary Degrees”**

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On December 19, 2020, Dr. Caridad Oli Abuan, CESO III, Former Regional Director of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) – Regional Office III, gave a lecture entitled *“Preserving the Honor of the ‘Honoris Causa’: Revisiting the Guidelines on the Conferment of Honorary Degrees”*. In the said lecture, Dr. Abuan was able to help graduate school students, professors, school administrators and other concerned individuals and institutions/organizations revisit the guidelines on the conferment of honorary degrees, as well as the various issues and controversies surrounding its conferment. Specifically, she gave emphasis on the following: (1) guidelines by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, (2) issues and controversies in the conferment of honorary degrees, and (3) how to preserve the honor in the conferment of honorary degrees in the midst of the various issues and controversies.

In the said event, Dr. Edessa G. Flordeliz, an Associate Professor at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan, served as the moderator while Dr. Angelyn M. Pangilinan, an Assistant Professor IV at the University of Makati, gave the welcome message.

Citing CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 50, s. 2012, Dr. Abuan shared that an honorary degree (*honoris causa*, “for the sake of honor” in Latin), is an extra-ordinary academic degree awarded to an eminent individual (who may be an alumnus, or one who has never been connected with the awarding institution). She furthered that, “Consistent with the institution's mission and values, the honorary doctorate degree shall be awarded in recognition of an individual's meritorious contribution/s to the advancement of a field in a particular discipline, through exemplary accomplishment/s in instruction, research and practice and his/her personal humanitarian accomplishment/s and contribution to the institution and society, rather than as a result of academic matriculation and study”.

Dr. Abuan also discussed the scope and categories of the *honoris causa*, as well as its requirements, procedures and other conditions. She mentioned that by following the guidelines set by the Commission and realizing the true importance and value of the said conferment, issues and controversies can be avoided and the true honor that is engraved in this honorary degree can truly be preserved.

Immediately after her lecture, an open forum was conducted. Aside from asking questions, it was also commendable that some participants were also sharing their inputs or insights on the topic being discussed. The exchange of views between Dr. Angelita D. Romero and Dr. Bayani Santos, together with the inputs of Dr. Abuan as the lecturer, made the event more meaningful.

On my part, I was really amazed with how Dr. Abuan delivered her lecture. Of all her inputs, I was really impressed with her statement, “Who am I to judge?”, wherein she mentioned that people should be happy and appreciative of the achievements of others (instead of being judgmental), and that respect to each and everyone is very important as we are all professionals. Nevertheless, she clarified

that following the guidelines is indispensable and must not be compromised to really preserve the honor on the conferment of honorary degrees. She encouraged the audience to verify the legitimacy of award-giving bodies, institutions or organizations, specifically those conferring honorary degrees.