

Gratitude for a Rewarding, Adventurous, and Challenging Semester —A DRBU Open-Mic Sharing 法界佛教大學「感恩自由談」

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What makes us grateful? Following masking, social distancing, and other COVID protocols could be very challenging as we come to campus to connect in person, build friendships, and deepen our understanding in the Dharma through shared inquiry. And yet, external difficulties do not seem to take away our gratitude. During DRBU's final week on campus—the week before Thanksgiving week, students, faculty, and staff shared what we are grateful for at an open-mic during lunch in the courtyard. The students were the most active to grab the mic. A few highlights are captured here along with some added background on the students.

Sehen (BA'25) told a few jokes as usual before he turned to everyone and said his "thank you." Before this semester started, Sehen wasn't sure if and when he could make it to campus because of his visa issue in his home country Sri Lanka. Leaving his family in Sri Lanka and coming all the way to DRBU at age 18, the journey itself was an adventure.

我們因何感恩？當我們到學校和人打交道，建立友誼，並深入瞭解佛法的同時，我們必須遵循各項規定，包括佩戴口罩、維持社交距離、以及其他防疫措施，可以說是頗具挑戰性。然而，外在的困難阻擋不了我們的感恩。感恩節的前一週，是法界佛教大學2021年秋季班最後一個星期在校上課，全校學生和教職員在午餐期間舉行了「感恩自由談」，在學校庭院中分享我們每個人的感恩。學生們最踴躍發言，以下是他們的發言重點以及

Sanju (MA'23) appreciated the conversations, discussions, classes, walks, and practices that she had with everyone. After graduating from St. John's College—a Great Books Institution—Sanju taught seventh grade math for a year before coming to DRBU. Writing is one of her spiritual practices in the morning to gain insights and mental clarity. She has a vision to dedicate a period of time to writing in her Grandma's humble abode in a village in eastern Nepal overseeing Kangchenjunga Mountain.

Alex (BA'24) shared how grateful he was for his cohort and the support he received from his classmates. He was delighted to meet other DRBU students, faculty, and staff on campus. Alex connects to his voice in a profound way and values deeply how he uses his voice through speaking or singing. This semester, he explored channeling his voice into chanting during the live-streaming of the Guanyin session at CTTB and the Medicine Buddha Repentance at Gold Mountain Monastery. This opened him up to a new form of spiritual practice that deeply resonated with him.

Quinn (BA'23) shared the challenges that she experienced this semester. She wished it was not the last week on campus because she felt now she had more mental space to make better use of this community living and to learn and grow together. Before coming to DRBU, Quinn lived in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was through the classes offered at the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery that she found out about DRBU. She has an aptitude for Sanskrit and enjoys Indian classics.

Blake (MA'23) took some time to express gratitude to each person there and for what they've brought to the DRBU experience. He thoroughly enjoyed the class on the *Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra*, purchased his own copy, and plans to take it with him on life's journey. Before coming to DRBU, he graduated from Pomona College and studied embodied philosophical practices on a fellowship around the world, which eventually brought him to monasteries and then to DRBU. Besides writing a novel, he does a lot of yogasanas and sitting in his spare time. He also thoroughly enjoys working on the farm.

Rachel (MA'22) spoke in tears, "There's no place that's perfect, but DRBU is pretty close to it. I think this is because everyone does their best each day to arrive with pure intentions and be the kindest versions of themselves. I'm really grateful this is where I ended up and that this place exists." Rachel visited

一些背景訊息：

斯漢（大學部一年級）照例先說了幾個笑話，然後向大家說「謝謝！」。這個學期開始之前，斯漢還不確定是否能到校上課，以及什麼時候能來，因為他在祖國斯里蘭卡遇到簽證問題。他18歲離開斯里蘭卡的家，一路來到法界佛教大學就讀，這趟行程本身就是一段歷險記。

桑婕（碩士班一年級）十分珍惜她在此和大家對話、討論、上課、散步、修行的日子。她畢業於聖約翰學院，該校以「巨作制度」研讀古往今來的經典著作聞名。畢業後她教了一年的初中數學，然後來法大就讀。每天早上寫作，增強她的洞察力，也讓頭腦清楚，成為她的修行法門之一。她有個願景，就是要花一段時間，在她姥姥位於尼泊爾東部的村落小屋寫作，從那裡可以看到干城章嘉山（世界三大高峰之一）。

艾力克斯（大學部二年級）分享他對同年級學生的謝意，以及他從班上同學那裡所獲得的支持。他很高興和法大同學們以及教職員在學校相逢。艾力克斯以深刻的方式談到他的聲音，他也深深珍惜如何在說話和唱誦時運用聲音。這學期，他嘗試在萬佛聖城觀音七、金山聖寺藥師懺直播期間，將自己的聲音導向唱誦。這為他開啟了修行的新型態，也引起了他甚深共鳴。

昆恩（大學部二年級）分享在本學期中遇到的挑戰。她很希望這不是（本學期）在校的最後一週，因為她現在的的心理空間比較大，明白能如何更好地活在這個大家庭中，和大家一起學習、成長。就讀法大之前，昆恩住在舊金山灣區，透過柏克萊佛寺提供的課程，讓她發現法大。她很喜歡梵文課以及印度經典課程。

布萊克（碩士班一年級）對在場每個人都表達感恩，因為他們都為法大付出。他特別受惠於《六祖法寶壇經》課程，不但自掏腰包請購一本，還打算以此經伴隨終身。他畢業於波莫納學院，並以獎學金

DRBU campus when she was deciding between pursuing a PhD in neuroscience and studying at DRBU to deepen her understanding of Buddhist philosophy and gain more clarity on what direction she needed to go in life; she chose the latter.

Sehen was moved by Rachel's words and grabbed the mic again. "I've complained a lot. I know a lot of people have been like, 'Oh, I'm tired. I'm exhausted, kind of drained...' and then it just reminded me that it's really about the heart, the sincerity that we all put into the experience. When we're all in the good place, we all see the goodness in each other at that moment. The root of all of it is just that intense love that we all have for this place, and what we're learning, and how we interact with each other. I know I joke around a lot, but I'm really, sincerely grateful for everyone."

A student expressed his deep gratitude toward the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua. It was the Venerable Master's vision and effort from the very beginning that helped establish the guiding principles for the education at DRBU, making what DRBU is today possible and continuing to guide DRBU's future.

Dr. Sue Rounds, the President of DRBU, said, "As I look out at this wonderful gathering I am very grateful for our beautiful courtyard, which is the result of hard work by some of our former and current students. I'm glad that we have been able to gather here as a community this semester and share food and conversation with each other. And I am grateful to each one of you for everything you do to make DRBU such a special place."

A faculty member shared how different this year was for her compared to last year. Just coming together and being in the students' presence, she felt they are like family and DRBU is like home. She was really grateful for being together during this very trying time globally and for the students' tremendous trust in the program and their decision to come all the way to DRBU from around the world.

Doug, a senior teacher at DRBU, spoke at the end. He described the DRBU education as an incredible adventure because the students trust themselves to something that's so unusual and so different. "What I really appreciated is your own internal work. But it's all with a goal of trying to help people on a larger scale. And the balance between the Bodhisattva vows for the larger world and your own process of working through your own stuff is a conscious, kind of rhythmic

在全球各地研習「體現的哲學實踐」，其後他到寺廟進修，最後來到法大。除了寫小說之外，他經常練習瑜伽體位法，並抽空打坐。他也非常喜歡在萬佛聖城的有機農場工作。

瑞秋（碩士班二年級）發言時，淚水盈眶。她說：「世上沒有完美的地方，但法大相當接近完美。我想這是因為每人每天來到法大時，都帶著純淨的想法，展現出最仁慈的一面。我很感恩來到法大就讀，也感恩有這個地方的存在。」瑞秋在決定要攻讀神經科學博士學位，或者來法大就讀，以深入瞭解佛教哲學，並更清楚人生的方向之際，曾親自來法大校園參觀。最終她選擇了後者。

瑞秋的發言讓斯漢頗為感動，因此斯漢再度拿起麥克風發言說：「我實在抱怨太多了。我知道很多人都曾說『喔！我累了。我累壞了，簡直筋疲力盡。』這讓我想到，其實一切在於心，在於我們付出的誠意。當我們都在一個好地方，那一刻我們互相看到彼此的好處。這一切的根源來自我們深愛這個地方、以及我們所學、我們彼此如何互動等。我知道我常開玩笑，但我真的誠心誠意感恩大家。」

還有一個學生對宣公上人表達深刻的感恩。正是上人在創校之初的遠見和努力，建立起法大人文教育的指導宗旨，才能讓法大發展至今，並繼續引導法大的未來。

法大校長蘇珊·朗思說：「放眼今天的美好聚會，我非常感恩我們擁有美麗的庭院，這是本校部份校友和現在的同學們辛勤努力的成果。很高興這學期我們能夠在這裡像大家庭一樣相聚，彼此分享食物和談話。我也感恩大家為法大的付出，使法大成為一個如此特殊的地方。」

一位教授分享的是：對她而言，今年和去年如何不同。這學期學生到校上課，師生相聚，令她感到彼此如同家人，而法大就像家庭。在全球共同面臨困難的時

struggle.” He then talked about the significance of the Thanksgiving break and the following winter break. “You’re not leaving for a break, [but] continuing the semester in a different place. Most people learn more or as much [during the break] as they learned while they were here. Because you get to take back whatever you’re working on here to the environment that you’ve come out of and actually see what’s going on in that transformation.”

He continued to express his gratitude for the students. “Being here with you guys, working through that transformation in yourselves, we get to continue to work on it in ourselves. Every time I see a little bit of that freedom opening up [in you], I’m very happy. And not only am I happy for you, but I get to experience that vicariously. Every one of you is just an incredible adventure in life. And I’m really inspired by every one of you. Thank you very much!”

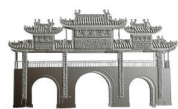
The open-mic has ended, but the question remains: What makes us grateful? Misfortune does not seem to take away our gratitude. Very often, it may even have increased our gratitude. Then gratitude must come from a deeper place that’s beyond the external conditions, favorable or unfavorable. May that deeper place continue to ground us in gratitude in the coming years. ❀

刻，她非常感恩大家能夠相聚，她也感恩學生對法大的充份信任，從世界各地前來法大就讀。

最後發言的是法大資深教授包果勒，他認為學生們願意把自己託付給一所這麼與眾不同、非比尋常的大學，來到法大所受的教育，可以形容為不可思議的探險。他說：「我真正感恩的是你們的內心，都以多多幫助世人為目標。而在菩薩廣度眾生的願力和你們得搞定自己的事情之間，要想取得平衡，可是一場有意識的、律動式的奮鬥。」他接著談到感恩節假期以及寒假的重要性：「你們不是就這樣放假去了，而是要繼續這個學期的學習，只是不同的地方而已。多數人（在假期中）可以學得更多，或者學到跟在此所學的一樣多。因為你們將帶走你們在這裡的學習成果，回到你來此之前的環境，並看到在這轉變過程中，所發生的一切。」

他繼續表達對學生的感恩：「和各位同學相聚，我們要繼續努力，來共同轉變你們自己。每次當我看到（你們）有些許自在解脫，我就非常高興。我不僅為你們高興，我也能感同身受。各位都是人生中不可思議的奇遇，我真的受到你們每一位的啟發。非常謝謝大家。」

這次的感恩自由談已經圓滿結束，但問題仍然持續：我們因何感恩？苦難不幸似乎不能讓我們忘掉感恩，往往還讓我們更加感恩。這樣說來，感恩一定來自更深處，超越外在的狀況，無論幸與不幸。祈願那更深之處，在未來的歲月中，讓我們繼續滿懷感恩。❀



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