

## Passing Cum Laude Despite Financial Limitations

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YOGYAKARTA - Studying at Universitas Gadjah Mada has become a dream for many high school students, including Puji Utomo dan Atik Winarti. Both came from underprivileged families, but they never lost the hope to aspire for a bright future through education. They have proved that despite their limitatitons, they can graduate with flying colours from UGM.

Puji Utomo, 22, has a father that makes their living by selling fish in the Juwana fish market in Central Java. The father had to go around midnight to do the job and return home in the morning. "He has sold fish for the past six years; previously he was a becak driver," said the Civing Engineering graduate that passed *cum laude* in February.

He said of all six siblings, only he could go to university. The other children went straight to work after passing high schools. Puji managed to get the government's Bidikmisi scholarship. He saved the remainder of the scholarship for his father to help with his business that once was halted due to funding. "*Alhamdulillah*, now the business has run well," said Puji that once became mosque keeper and taught some disabled children to have a little more money.

Despite all of these difficulties, Puji always studied hard and graduated Cum Laude with a GPA of 3.86. Now, Puji plans to return to Bakaran Wetan village in Juwana, Pati. "I want to join the move where university graduates improving the future of their own villlage," he said.

Another success story came from Atik Winarti, who passed *cum laude* and earned GPA 3.78 from Animal Sciences faculty in only 4 years and 4 months. The girl from Babadan in Cirebon also



received the Bidikmisi scholarship for 8 semesters. Atik had to pay for extra tuition due to her thesis writing that took another semester to complete. During this time she could only afford to eat once a day. Fortunately, her fellow students often lent her money or even bought her lunches.

During this semester, Atik had to live in modesty but did not ask for her parents to help as she knew they were struggling on their own, too. “We have to be able to survive, we have to live economically,” she said.

Atik then gave private teaching to elementary school students where she could earn as much as IDR300 thousands per month. At some points in her life, with her friends she would sell food at night to get more cash. Even so, Atik kept active, always joining grant competitions for research. She even once won third place in the National Debate for Animal Sciences Students.

Now, Atik said she was fortunate to have been awarded the Bidikmisi scholarship that had sent her to graduation. “I could not imagine if I had not received the scholarship,” she said.

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