

Welcoming Remarks

President Robert Underwood

Spring 2015 Commencement, May 24, 2015

Buenas tatdes todos hamyo taotao isla, taotao Guam yan taotao i Unibetsidat- Hafa Adai

It is my privilege each commencement to give welcoming remarks at this wonderful ceremony. It is a Commencement exercise so we are reminded that it is just a beginning. It is the culmination of one phase of your university education at either a Bachelor or Masters level, so it is simultaneously a commemoration. To commence or to commemorate remains the binary feature of this ceremony, the epistemological duality if you studied philosophy as in the world is made up of mind and matter. If you are still finishing your degree, you might say if you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

But here at the University we do mind and you do matter.

If we choose to commemorate, we think about our personal accomplishments. We think about the University and its trifold mission- and I was reminded by a former Chair of the Board of Regents, Dr. Chris Perez who is ill at this moment, about our mission just a few days ago. He told me, "*Robeto, sangani fan i taotao-ta put ina, deskubre, setbe*" I will take this as an obligation to repeat his words-

Ina is to enlighten, *Deskubre* is to discover and *Setbe* is to serve. A University of Guam education has helped you finish the first two- you are enlightened, or at least more enlightened than when you first came to this campus; and you have discovered, you have discovered elements of knowledge, facets of theory, characteristics about others and yourself. While your journey towards Enlightenment- Ina and Discovery-*Deskubre* will remain lifelong pathways, your UOG education has helped you understand the necessity to continue down that path. *Put fabot, kontenuha i che'cho'-miyu yan tattiyi este na dos chalan.*

But the third part of the University mission remains largely in front of you as graduates- *Setbe*, to serve, to do well and to do good for these island societies that we are blessed to inhabit and so fortunate to come from. *Setbe* is to assist, *setbe* is to make oneself a contributor to others, *setbe* is to live out a value of sacrifice for the greater good.

Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian leader understood the connection between knowledge and discovery and service when he said,

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

As we consider the power of *Setbe*, this ceremony becomes less a matter of Commemoration of the past but more an envisioning of the future, a Commencement whereby we begin the journey towards the future. Dr. Chris Perez's words were very powerful, "remind them that the journey to service is the most critical one and it is the most reflective of a good university education."

We grapple with this issue all of the time in education. Is your achievement a public good or a personal good? At a time like this, we want to throw confetti in the air, do somersaults on the stage, blow the horn for yourself, but in reality this is the commencement of a very difficult path in which the outcome is uncertain but the goal is clear. Most things about this ceremony lead us to believe that this is about a private, personal good. But *Setbe* pulls us in the other direction. *Setbesiu- setbe, fanetbe*, using your knowledge in the service of others, being that change that makes a difference in the lives of others.

Today, we honor the personal good and the public good. We honor a valedictorian based largely on personal achievement. But we also honor Frank Rabon whose personal knowledge has provided much public good and we will listen to two commencement speakers who demonstrate through their lives the intersection between being concerned about self, relationships with others and the public good.

We don't always fully comprehend the oppositional nature of commencement and commemoration; is this a reflection about the past or a vision of the future and we will always be trying to rectify the personal good with the public good; is this about me or is it about all of us, but always and through it all, you learned how to be effective participant in 21st century life here at the University of Guam.

We are proud of you and you can be proud of yourselves, but take the time to be also proud of the institution that nurtured you, that strengthened, that enlightened you, that started you on a voyage of discovery and insists that you are not completely educated or formed until you serve- Ina, Deskubre, Setbe-

It must inspire us all to say Biba UOG! Biba UOG Biba