

**Cassandra Dimla**  
**Valedictorian Speech**  
**Spring 2015 Commencement, May 24, 2015**

Buenas and Hafa adai faculty, staff, distinguished guests, family, friends, and most importantly my fellow spring 2015 graduates.

You and I both know that the usual valedictorian speeches consist of lines like "we are the future" and "we now define our society". I was advised to stay away from such clichés. However, as I continued to reflect on these words, it dawned on me that perhaps these clichés are overused for a good reason. Perhaps they're overused because they possess the truth that needs to be emphasized, that we are the future, and after one last walk down this stage, we do have the power to re-define the foundations of our society. It is up to us now to use that power wisely.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." After four or more years of late nights working tirelessly to complete one assignment after another or even longer days filled with back to back classes just to make it to this very day, we can soon, hold our diplomas up in the air, take a selfie with it of course and caption it as I did it! At this point, I should probably say that gone are those sleepless nights and even more exhausting days, but realistically speaking, we have many more coming our way. Whether you decide to apply for a job or grab yourself another diploma, we will always find ourselves faced with work we need to complete. But I can only continue to hope that the feeling that we have once those diplomas are in our hands, as if we are on top of the world, will be the same feeling we will have once we climb over our next hurdles after this day.

The University of Guam has provided us with all it can to fuel our success. We now have in us the skills to use in paving our future. I have no doubt that you are all able to go and become successful individuals. The fact that you are sitting in those seats waiting for your diplomas is proof in itself, but the beauty of living in our island is that we will never have to face our hurdles alone. It seems like quite a responsibility, to find a way to take our abilities and use them in making our island a better place, but as I look before me today, I see faces filled with excitement and determination faces ready to conquer the challenges ahead. As an aspiring educator, I have learned that the real magic is not in working alone and succeeding; it is in working with others and learning how to succeed together.

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. None of us would be where we are today without our constant supporters pushing us through so here comes the easiest part of this speech to write. I'd like to thank my best friends, Google and Pinterest for always having my back especially late at night when I was fresh out of ideas for a creative way to do my assignments. But on a more serious note, on behalf of the soon to be graduates, we would like to extend our deepest and sincerest gratitude to our supporters in this field house today. To our professors, who have gone above and beyond their calls of duty to ensure that we become well-rounded individuals as we begin or continue our journeys.

To the entire school of education, most especially Dr. Mcmanus, Mrs. Cardenas, and Mrs. Roberto, you all have done phenomenal jobs at ensuring that we are well prepared for our future students. Thank you for answering all my emails and text messages even if they

happened to be sent at the middle of the night. To all our friends and family, who are either here with us today or elsewhere waiting for the ceremony to end because they were outside the 9 guest quota, know that we are all so blessed to have you all in our lives, endlessly supporting and believing in us.

To my dearest ultra sassy Felicia friends, victor, Jason, Kebor, and David, thank you for giving me the laughs I needed when things got rough. I will always be grateful that it was you four that stuck by me through my college journey. To my sped sisters, thank you for being my ultimate sources of sanity through these last two years and for being my lifeline whenever I was having a particularly hard day. I couldn't have made it through without all your help. To my best boos, Jade, Paula, and Caitlin, thank you for being my best "frenemies" in middle school, my lunch dates in high school, and my support system in college. I'm beyond blessed to have found such amazing non-biological sisters in you three. To my better and more patient half, I don't know if I have enough words to describe how grateful I am to have someone as loving as you. Thank you for dealing with my academic mood swings and for always being my number 1 fan even when I'm not so loveable.

Last but not the least, I would not be the person I am today if not for my family. To my sisters, ate Ann, ate bam, and ate Sara, thank you for being my constant role models and going from my personal shoppers to my life coaches and everything in between. Shout out to my baby brudder, jdimz. You da real mvp! With you four in my corner, along with my lolas and aunties here today and the rest of my family in the Philippines or in the states who will be watching this speech for days to come, I become even stronger when facing whatever lemons life hands me. And to mama and papa Dimla, thank you for teaching me that I can do whatever I set my mind to doing. You both have given me such unconditional love and support, and I can only hope to have made you as proud as you truly deserve. I am who I am today because of the values you have instilled in me.

My fellow spring 2015 graduates, this is it. After our graduation festivities are all said and done, we will face a blank canvas once more. Whether you find yourself in your own classroom, office, playground, kitchen, or what-have-you, always keep in mind the passion you started your journey with. Success is the sum of all your efforts; repeated day in and day out. So go because as dr. Seuss said, you have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself in any direction you choose! There is good reason why they call these ceremonies "commencement exercises." Graduating from UOG is not the end of our journey. It is only the beginning.