

Buenas yan Hafa Adai, Todos. Thanks very much, President Underwood, for your kind introduction—and for your tremendously generous advice and help throughout this transition. You and Nerissa have been wonderfully supportive to Patty and me, and it means a lot to both of us.

Thanks, too, to Chief Justice Maraman for honoring us all by presiding today, to the Board of Regents—especially past Chair of the Board, Betty Gayle, and to the newly elected Chair, Chris Felix, and all the regents for your support and guidance. And to all of the students, faculty, staff, and administrators of UOG—as well as the Board of Directors of the UOG Endowment Foundation and other key supporters of UOG here today—all of whom have helped me so much throughout these first months and brought us all to today’s ceremony. It is also a great honor to me and to all of UOG to have Governor Calvo, Speaker Terlaje, Lt Gov-elect Tenorio, and our other elected leaders with us. Si Yuos Maase.

Today is a celebration of UOG and all who have brought it to its present state of excellence in Ina, Deskubre, and Setbe—Enlightenment, Discovery and Service. This mission statement for UOG encapsulates First, the teaching mission that was at the core of our foundation in 1952, Secondly, the serious, world-class research in fields as varied as marine biology, water resources, disability services, sustainability, and Chamorro and Micronesian studies; and Thirdly, the service mission that brings our research and teaching to the people of Guam and Micronesia generally.

As I have read and digested the history of UOG and begun to learn more about Guam and Micronesia, I’ve been struck by many things, including how amazing our natural environment and biodiversity are, by how intrepid Chamorro sailors navigated to this place—150 generations ago—aboard flying proas that were the fastest means of human travel until the invention of the steam engine; and I’ve been amazed by how Guam was the first island in the whole of the Pacific that was known to the outside world, by how Guam was unique in being the only U.S. state or territory to suffer invasion, occupation, and liberation in World War II, and by how the Chamorro culture has both welcomed people from the world over but maintained its essence and way of life.

I come to Guam and UOG as a welcomed outsider, with an outsider’s eye and some experiences that I hope will help UOG continue its upward climb. Having grown up in the Virgin Islands and taught in Jamaica, I bring some awareness of island communities and colonial and postcolonial sensitivities. As a lifelong sailor, I admire those amazing Chamorro inventors and navigators who braved some of the longest voyages in human history. As a career Air Force officer, I hope to be able to foster stronger bonds between Guam and the bases it hosts, and on behalf of our many veterans. As an English literature scholar who specializes in the cultures of the Caribbean, I bring an appreciation for how seriously small island communities take their cultural heritage and how it is portrayed to the outside world. And as a university administrator at a variety of both public and private universities, I bring experience of and an appreciation for efficient and effective management of resources and support for the research, teaching and service missions of universities.

The history of UOG since the turn of this century is one of steady improvement in autonomy, accountability, and effectiveness. I am most impressed with the leadership of the Board of Regents and the way that the Regent Nominating Committee has enabled the university to be as autonomous as the other great Land Grant Universities of America while also being responsible and answerable to the people of Guam. The past two decades have witnessed the leadership of two remarkable UOG presidents—Harold Allen and Robert Underwood. President Allen took bold steps to stabilize the university at a critical moment and established a firm foundation. Upon that foundation, President Underwood inspired the community to go from Good to Great, and instituted a range of far-sighted innovations as well as some hard-but-necessary efficiencies. Senior Vice President Anita Borja Enriquez and Vice President Randy Wiegand and their teams have raised the bar for accreditations and laid the foundations for operational improvements.

As I learn more and more about the institution, I am convinced that our strengths lie in three areas—areas that I label, People—Island—and Leadership. By People, I mean all the ways that UOG leads and is notable for research and teaching of Chamorro and Micronesian studies and for the professions that serve people most directly, including education and the health sciences; By the label Island, I mean all the ways UOG contributes to new knowledge in marine, environmental and freshwater research, in subjects specific to small islands and their sustainability; and by the label Leadership, I mean all the ways that UOG develops leadership skills in many professions and fields of endeavor—from business and public administration to professional development in public and private enterprise.

These are the three pillars that I think UOG is now standing on—and the three that its future advances should capitalize on. I have always thought that presidents and other leaders should help their organizations to become “their best selves”—to fulfill their own unique potential. I also think that such full potential depends on leaders to create a vision and structures to generate synergy across mission areas. So, as I think about People—Island—Leadership, I’ll be trying to imagine how we can foster connections between and among these elements. So, for example, how can we ensure that a uniquely Chamorro or Micronesian element infuses every aspect of what we do? Are there ways to teach or to tutor students that is more sensitive to our way of life? If, for example, our students are hesitant to seek help from honored older people (like professors), can we devise a system of peer-tutoring that will serve them better? Can we go beyond even that to ask, How is what you’re doing reflective of our Western Pacific cultures and situation?

As we think about the category of Islands, can we ask all of our disciplines to ask themselves, how is what you’re researching and teaching related to this island, these islands, or island-ness? Are their elements of Chamorro or other Micronesian cultures that can foster more responsible stewardship of our islands? And as we think about Leadership, can we ask all of us at UOG to think of our responsibility to serve as models for others in our communities? How can we be better known in Guam and the wider world as a place for leadership development that is uniquely of these islands of the Western Pacific and devoted to their sustainability in environmental, social and economic ways?

As we move ahead, building on the successes of our past, I expect that UOG will become ever more the nexus of partnership in Guam and the region. I am impressed with the degree to which UOG already is the It-Place, the Go-To place to get innovative things done. I am impressed with how many UOG graduates are in leadership roles throughout the region. Thanks to recent developments, we are poised to become better able to form public-private partnerships and to support grant applications and to professionally administer them—not just for UOG but for partners throughout Guam and the region.

I am impressed with the robust regional mission of UOG—that it is not only the University OF Guam, but also the University FOR Micronesia—and I believe that we can become an even greater center of unity across our kaleidoscope of cultures of the Western Pacific. I am impressed with the many ways that UOG faculty and staff contribute to the betterment of businesses and organizations—and I think we can do more to provide professional development and training in the future. I am pleased to have students at UOG from many countries in the region and beyond—all represented by the flags over our heads. I think we can attract more students from abroad for short-term and long-term study. I think we can get more of our Guam students to travel abroad—especially to other islands in the region, as I believe they will develop a new affection and greater wisdom by seeing their island from the vantage point of others.

So, we Tritons have much to be proud of and much important work to look forward to. It is a special privilege to be able to work hard at work worth doing—and I can't imagine any more important work to do than to advance enlightenment, discovery and service in our world. Thanks to the hard work of those who have gone before, we can reach higher— as our Latin motto has it, excelsior—ever upward, para'hulo.

So, to conclude, Si Yuos Maase for the honor you all bestow on me, both this office and this splendid ceremony. I pledge to do my best to sustain and foster Ina Deskubre Setbe.

Biba Tritons! Biba UOG!