

University of Guam
Fañomnåkan 2018 Commencement Ceremony
May 20, 2018, 2:00 p.m., Calvo Field House

Valedictorian Speech

Alicia Mai Perrin, Bachelor of Arts in Education (BAEd), Elementary Education

Good afternoon my fellow graduates, UOG faculty and staff, and all our wonderful guests. Since many of you don't know me, let me provide some context. I'm Alicia Perrin and just about 48 hours ago during our graduation rehearsal, it was announced that I am this semester's valedictorian. I knew it would be a great honor to represent graduates from the University of Guam and School of Education, but as I sat back down after the announcement, a few of my classmates could see the deer in the headlights look on my face.

I was terrified. I had less than 48 hours to write and prepare for a speech. I remember internally panicking about what I was going to say and thinking of everything that was different now. My seat was moved on stage, away from most of my fellow graduates and the classmates I've had several classes with. Instead of facing the stage with you, my friends, I would be spending the ceremony awkwardly gazing into all of your lovely faces. Unfortunately, with my new seating arrangement, I could not walk up to the stage with my fellow singer - Ian - either. There would also likely be several graduation pictures with me in the background looking out of it throughout this wonderful, and as we all expect, very long ceremony. And of course, there would be my proud parents' reactions. Especially my mother's who would insist even more adamantly than usual that at least on this special day, with myself in the spotlight, I should wear make-up, use contacts, and style my hair despite my protests. As you can see, I caved. Long story, short: it was a whirlwind change to what I assumed would be a calm few days before graduation. I was terrified at the announcement, felt lost from the changes during rehearsal, and was nervous when considering what I would actually say. In fact, I'm still nervous now during this speech's delivery, if you can't tell.

But then I remind myself that I was also nervous about singing the Guam Hymn to all of you, making a speech at Convocation, being a student teacher, and even doing classroom presentations. I was uncertain for a number of years on what major to even declare before I went into Education and many years ago, I was once afraid of attending college too. But here I am today, pounding heart and all checking these events off my list. If it seems like I'm just talking about myself, I kind of am, but I swear there's a point to all this. And the point is, I was afraid like all of you have been nervous or afraid. But I'm still here. We all have fears, insecurities, nerves, or uncertainty about some things in our lives and the changes that occur. Maybe you were afraid of leaving home or were nervous about finals. Perhaps you were uncertain about whether or not you picked the right field, were worried about whether you'd be a good parent, or have been scared to death about asking out that person you like. Some of us today likely have fears along with excitement about finally entering the workforce in our respective fields too. We may wonder and worry whether we are prepared; whether we will do our jobs well. There is an endless list of cases like these, things that make us feel less than 100% sure or calm. It is a fact of life that there will always be something that gets in the way and makes us nervous or uncertain whether it's from our academic and career pursuits, our personal relationships, or like me, on a smaller scale, being up on a stage. However, we can't (and we shouldn't) let those fears freeze us in our tracks.

So what can we do? Fear, insecurities, nerves, and uncertainty are common. We may not be able to eradicate them and be truly fearless, but we can take a deep breath and progress anyway. We can take those opportunities that present themselves and make the best of the situations we find ourselves in instead of throwing in the towel or refusing to act. We can recognize how we are our own worst critics and enemies and learn to overcome it. That's what I want for all of you and myself - to persevere through any challenges and fears you may feel like you can't face, no matter how small. And I know we can do it because if you think about it, the diplomas we will receive today represent perseverance and hard work above all else. My fellow graduates, despite the individual obstacles and challenges we have all faced and the fears we may have had over several years, we have finally come out on the other side of it all - victorious. Be proud and know that if you've persevered like this once, you can do it again several times over even under different circumstances. As long as you face your challenges and fears with the same spirit you used to obtain your degree, nothing can stop you. I can only hope you hang on to that spirit tightly. Thank you and congratulations.