

To the graduating class of 2020, CONGRATULATIONS!

Like many of you, we did not expect things to unfold as they have. However, this is a milestone nonetheless, and your work and dedication deserve to be embraced and celebrated! Some of you are the first in their family to receive a Bachelor's degree and some of you are international students who have traveled far to receive better education and to bring back hopes and dreams for your home countries.

Despite not having an in-person ceremony. By receiving our diploma, we shut down statistics that say that we would have never had taken the first steps. Together, with the help of our mothers, fathers, grandparents, sisters and brothers, we walked over adversity and we stomped out that small voice that told us to give up.

To my Pacific Islander brothers and sisters, we are the manifestation of our ancestors' pain and love. We come from a long line of navigators and our stories are endless like the Ocean. Let's continue to navigate into this world filled with the unknown but to never lose touch of our culture and our customs.

I would like to personally thank and recognize the CMAE advisors who have worked endlessly to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for students of color. It could be something small like providing snacks, creating room in their schedule to host homework sessions, or taking in my last-minute appointments. I would also like to thank Mr. Chris Young who has been my adviser for the past five years. Thank you for all your help in my college career and for your tireless advocacy for our Pacific Islander students and community. Last but not the least, I would like to thank my community members from the village of Utulei, my family and friends, which has shaped me into the person that I am today. Thank you for your support and for reminding me of my potential on hard days. It is true when they say that it takes a village to raise a child.

Graduates, don't be afraid to take the first step. Don't be afraid to make that big move. Don't be afraid to apply for your PhD, MD, or better yet, a law degree. **YOU DESERVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE.** I urge you to take your seat, no matter what you feel about yourself or how much you think you don't belong there. Take your seat and don't undermine the importance and value of being there. Your seat is your way of serving your family and community. Your seat will serve the greater purpose of humanity.

This is only the beginning. The beginning of a life long race and the only finish line is changing someone else's life.