Intro:
Polani is graduating from UO with a Bachelor of Arts degree in public relations and a minor in business administration. In her 4 years at the UO she has been a Building Business leaders mentor, an Ambassador and Multicultural Recruiter, an account executive for Allen Hall PR, Financial coordinator for UO PIC and President of Hui ‘O Hawai’i. She plans on returning to Hawai’i to work for a small PR firm in Honolulu and to continue sharing her passion for her culture wherever she goes.

Speech:

Hello all,

As ___ said, my name is Polani Mo’okini, and I am extremely grateful to have been asked to speak with you all today. A little bit about me as we get started, I am not in any way shape or form a motivational speaker, nor can I give you amazing advice about “adulting” or how to navigate life after graduation. I am however, a proud Hawaiian/Filipino woman who has prepared to give my mahalo or thanks to all of people and resources that have helped me, and you all, reach this point today.

First, I would like to thank the CMAE, for providing a home for us, full of momma hugs from Barbara, and snacks from Joann. I personally know that I and some of my closest friends would not be here at school if it wasn’t for the work that you all put in. For a period of time, the CMAE gave me the closest thing to a family here at Oregon, formerly known as Kalapu Pasifika (now UOPIC). That specific group of people humbled me, and made me proud of my heritage. So proud, in fact, that I was driven to graduate not only for myself, but on behalf of the cultures that I represent, as I am sure many of you are doing today. In being one of the founding members of UO PIC as well as leading Hui ‘O Hawai’i for the past 2 years, I have gained the strength and determination to progress--something that I plan on taking with me into the workforce. Growing not only in leadership, but in self confidence has helped me, and I’m sure most of you, realize that there is truly nothing that we can’t do--especially when we come together. So again, thank you to the CMAE for guiding us, and providing a resource that help lead us to where we are today.

I also wanted to point out how grateful I am to have a group of students like yourselves who have shared their cultures, and created spaces to thrive in an institution that was not initially made for us. I know I experienced a culture shock being here, but seeing people that look like me stay driven and be present despite any obstacle, motivated me to do more. As a person of color here, I kept hearing that people like me always had to fight harder, be more than a statistic, and to go the extra mile. So, if no one has told you, thank you. Thank you for being unapologetically you. For standing up against stereotypes and negative comments. For giving this school a taste of how great it is to be multicultural and proud. For showing me how strong we are when we come together and giving me the comfort knowing that I will have people on my side even after I leave Oregon. All of us were already amazing individuals, now, we are fortified
with a degree. You are the physical results of the excellence that diversity brings to any space, and no matter what your next course of action is you will shine.

Mahalo nui loa and e Ho’omaika’i (congratulations to all) and last but not least, GO DUCKS!