

Education is the key to success
Keynote address at the National University of Samoa foundation programme
graduation 2010

So'oalo Kuresa So'oalo

I lau Susuga Ile tā'ita'i o le sauniga, lau Susuga Siasia Salesulu.

Afio lau Afioiga i le Ao o le Lunivesite, lau Afioiga i le Ao Mamalu o le MaIO Tuto'atasi o Samoa, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi ma lau Masi'ifo.

Afio /au Afioiga i le fa'aa'o o le Lunivesite, lau Afioiga i le Minisita o A'oga, Ta'alogaga ma _ Aganu'u, Lau Afioiga Magele Mauiliua Magele.

E'e ma pepe'a'ao lau Afioiga i le Peresetene po'o lau Afioiga i le Tapa'au o le Lunivesite: Polofesa Fui Le'apai Tu'ua Ilaoa Asofou So'o.

Tainane /e afio o le Sa'o ma lau Tofa le Tu'ua. A/alata'i Tulamala'e, ma Matua o Saofa'iga, ma le nofo a fuaiala o le Laumua o /e Papaigalagala, le mama/u lava lea i le Pulega.

Le pa'ia o le `aufa'au'u, ae a Samoa ua potopoto; le paia i /e afifio o Tama ma 'Alga, 'Alga fo'i ma Tama, le Usoga a Tumua ma Pule, Itu'au ma Alataua, 'Alga i le tai ma /e Va'a o Fonot. Susu fo'i feoi o le tala le/el, Susuga i fa'afeagaiga ma o outou faletua.

Pa'ia o matua ma `alga, malo fa'aaloo/ogia ma le `auvala'aulia, ali'l ma tama'ita'i. O pa'ia te'oto'oto na o le taeao ma le aso, tulou.

Ae ua `ite nei fanualalo Ina ua sina le galu a tamaali'i, ona atue lea o le tautai o /e vasa, Ma ua pala le mafua ma etoa atu o Iona sa. Ae fai mai le upu a le tapua'iga i le foga'ele'ele Ma ua tau mai le fa'atamasoali'iga ma le manuia, "se tautai a'e, ua fa'amalo le fai o le faiva, o lou meta lene."

O gagana is o fa'atamasoali'iga a le atunu'u ua talafeauga ma fa'amoemoe o aso fa'apenei, ma ua fa'aosofia ai fo'i le lauga e fai se tala fa'amalosi'au ae se'i molimoli se tatou fa'afetai ma fa'a'ilo se tetou fa'amalo i le `au fa'a'u'u o lea ua tau /au o /e fa'amoemoe.

O le manumanu i le taimi ma ona olo'o filogia fo'i le laumua nei o le'a taumafai atu ai se upu i le gagana fa'aperetania, le gagana fa'aiunivesite, tulou.

Reverend Dr Siasia Salesulu.

Honourable Chancellor, Your Highness the Head of State, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi and Her Highness Masi'ifo Filifilia.

Pro-Chancellor, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Honourable Magele Mauiliua Magele.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Fui Le'apai Tu'ua Ilaoa Asofou So'o.

Management and staff of the National University of Samoa (NUS).

Graduates, invited guests, parents and friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I was humbled when I received the invitation to speak at this prestigious event. I asked myself many times over, why? Of all the academics in the country what qualities do I possess to warrant such an honour? I finally convinced myself that the only logical explanation is because I too, was once a proud graduate of this highly esteemed institution and so I see it as a rite of passage, if I may borrow from the words of famous Poet Emily Dickinson. It is therefore my wish to thank the NUS for giving me this opportunity.

To the graduates of 2011, *malo tauivi, malo onosa'i*. By the end of this speech, I hope to do what your parents, faculty members and other important people in your lives have been trying to do all along, that is, setting you on a path of happiness and prosperity and away from a life of indolence and crime. So don't say I didn't warn you. And please stay awake, I won't be long.

Graduation is the epitome and reward of years of hard work and study! It is the time to look back and say, "I made it!" Personally, I see it as a day of reflection and contemplation. It is a time to stop and think back on how it all began. So today, I offer this advice to the you, graduates of 2011, as guidance for your journey that you are about to embark on. "Never forget your roots and how it all began. Remember to thank the people who helped you, and be prepared for the amazing opportunities the future holds for you."

I know that many of you are unsure about the immediate future. It may seem a bit duller than the future that was experienced by others before you. With too many graduates and a seemingly high shortage of jobs the future may seem bleak and unpromising. But I ask you not to be afraid because in all honesty, and I am sure you are quite aware, you are amongst the fortunate of this country and the world as a whole. You have been given a priceless education at an exciting time, the age of technology - when education more than ever before is an economic advantage.

I want to share a few anecdotes from when I was growing up because I know the road to success is never easy and if I must reiterate that you should never forget how you got there and the people who helped you get there.

I will take you back in a journey through time; say 30 to 35 years ago. At the time I was a young village boy from Paia, Samauga Savai'i, yearning for a better life. I was raised in very humble beginnings and I will never forget how my parents struggled to put me through school with the ultimate belief that this was the key to a better future for me. And I thank God for my parents.

As a primary school student, the road to school wasn't easy literally. I had to be up at 5 am to walk for miles to school shoeless on unsealed roads everyday. Many years on, as I now have the luxury to drive around in a flash new car it is hard to imagine that I once did that. I had to wait until after school to eat when I got back home. The food that awaited us was usually cooked breadfruit (*saka ulu*). If we were lucky to have a few cents to spare for salt (or if the neighbour was feeling generous and gave us some) then the breadfruit would be cooked in coconut cream (*fa'alifu*). Dining out at a restaurant was unheard of in those days.

I recall the day my parents were told of my success in the entrance exam to Leifiifi Intermediate School in Apia. I was the first student from my village primary school to pass the exam in standard four or year six as we know it now. My father was so consumed with happiness that it was the first time I laid eyes on a large bottle of Vailima which he drank in celebration. That day, I saw Vailima as a drink associated with happiness and great achievement - a rather naive perception then must I add.

I look back on the hardships of getting an education and how much has changed over the years. I remember the wooden boats that used to travel between Salelologa and Mulifanua. I had to be careful when the strong currents rocked the boat because it usually meant getting wet before making it to my destination. It may seem ironic that I am now employed by the leading shipping company in Samoa, the Samoa Shipping Corporation (SSC).

I remember how my lifestyle quickly changed and how cool it was to mingle with the city boys from the Apia Maroons. Luckily, I was under the watchful eye of my aunty Fono who always made sure a harsh penalty awaited when I stepped out of line. Aunty Fono and Reverend Samu Lafoa'i treated me like their own. I thank God for them.

Another fond memory I have was my time studying at Malifa (when the university was there). It was the first time I touched a computer mouse and typed on a keyboard. Little did I know that at that time I was entering into the computer era. The skills I learned from there assisted me greatly when my former employer the Bank of Western Samoa (BWS) now ANZ Bank changed from a manual to a computerised system.

I still remember being so overjoyed when the school shifted to the Le Papaigalagala Campus, to the state of the art facilities. The new facilities motivated me to continue studying to the best of my ability. I remember Professor Bernie Wulf who was here to assist with setting up of the first Bachelor of Commerce Degree for the NUS. He told me, "Kuresa, to be successful with your studies, it's not intelligence, it's hard work."

I share these stories with you because I want you to remember your roots and your beginnings because only then you will be able to taste and feel the very essence and sweetness of success. Not because you are indebted to those who helped get you here today, although you are. Not because you are obligated to help the less fortunate, but because you have an obligation to yourself. The current American President Barack Obama once said, "It's only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you realise your true potential."

When you walk out here today, piece of paper in your hand, remember to thank your parents, families, friends, lecturers and everyone here at NUS. But most importantly, remember to thank your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ because it is only through Christ that all things are possible.

Today is only the beginning of a whole new chapter of your life and whatever career you hope to pursue, keep in mind that this is only step one. A wise man once said, "When you reach the ceiling, it becomes your floor so you will have a new ceiling." So soar higher, never stop learning because as someone who still continues studying today, I have realised that the more you learn the more you know that there is so much that you don't know. Former US Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker once quoted, "The man who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after."

For those of you who will now start job hunting or are already working don't treat your degree as a ticket to automatically sit in a Chief Executive Officer's chair or a top management position. Look at it as a permit to confirm your willingness to serve. Focusing your life solely on making money reflects poorly on your ambitions. It asks little of you. You need to take up the challenges faced by Samoans and make them your own.

If you are about to embark on a new career path, aim for a good start and remember the old adage "honesty is the best policy." If you start off being dishonest, then you have wasted years of study and you will be dishonest throughout your working life unless you let Jesus Christ take control.

I would like to make special mention of our forefathers, our government leaders and founders of the NUS. Because it was their vision and determination to establish the NUS, that has allowed people like myself and generations to come the opportunity to learn more and be able to contribute towards our nation's development. I must admit that if it wasn't for the NUS that gave me the opportunity, I would have not have made it to where I am today.

To the graduates of 2011, you are the flag bearers for the NUS and the nation. Wave this flag with pride, loyalty and honesty. Remember wherever you go your nation holds you in high regard because of the NUS and make sure you do not taint this confidence.

I part with the words of the former leader of the Catholic Church; Pope John XXIII. He said, "consult not your fears but your hopes and dreams. Think not about your

frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible to do."

Soifua ma is manuia.