

President Janyne M. Hodder

Closing Remarks

On the Occasion of the 30th Commencement Exercises

Diplomat Centre

Bahamas Faith Ministries International

Nassau, The Bahamas

Thursday, 31st May, 2007

We come now to the close of our ceremony this morning and in keeping with tradition, I would like to reflect briefly on the past and to share some thoughts about the future.

For many of you the time you have spent here has been one of great change, change for you personally but change also in the life and aspirations of The College. Today we stand deeply engaged in our transformation from College to University.

For over thirty years now, The College has been at the centre of nation-building through the provision of high-quality education that enables Bahamians to aspire to ever more challenging jobs and ever more fulfilling lives. The College was built on a powerful dream, bringing high quality tertiary education to The Bahamas.

At first, we only offered certificates and diplomas and associate

degrees. Over the years, made confident by the respect accorded our graduates who increasingly saw all their earned credits recognized by universities in other countries, we began to offer our very own Baccalaureate degrees, beginning with the Bachelor in Business but progressing to now include six Bachelor degrees and fifty-nine majors.

And then, it became clear that our natural growth must be towards becoming The University of The Bahamas. This was not so much a change in our journey as the increased clarity of our destination.

This transformation affects and must affect all we do. We need to increase and improve our infrastructure, in particularly our Library and the construction of new and improved facilities in Northern Bahamas. We need to improve our science facilities and our classrooms. We need more than infrastructure, however. We need to build new quality assurance mechanisms, to increase the level of research activity undertaken by our faculty. We need to build new programmes in areas of national need such as pharmacy, engineering, maritime and environmental sciences and others. We need to support the ongoing professional development of our faculty and staff, and we need to create and sustain those international links which make us part of an international community of universities. We need to begin to create knowledge in and for this country and not

simply transmit it. We need to find our way to supporting innovation that can be the keystone of ongoing prosperity and quality of life for Bahamians across the archipelago. We need to be a place for intellectual and creative energy to be channelled in the service of the nation and all its citizens in new ways, through new research, through new programmes, through strong national and international partnerships.

While these are real and important challenges, we need also to remember that we are building on solid foundations and there is no challenge in this respect for which we are unprepared.

We are doing well. You have seen forward movement in our building programme and innovative community outreach, our communications and our push to forge beneficial international relationships.

I am pleased to say that we our first faculty exchange is in progress. We have a faculty member from Munroe College in New York with us as a lecturer in Culinary Arts at our Culinary and Hospitality Management Institute and a faculty member of the same unity is enhancing her professional experiences at Munroe.

We have had our first student exchange. Two young men, one of whom is graduating today, spent the past semester at the University of Rhode Island. Their stellar performance there and the achievements of our students who have completed their degrees at other universities tell us that we can claim international parity for our academic programmes. Today, we are graduating students with a master's degree in Teaching and Learning with Technology from a collaborative programme with Ashford University. The College currently offers and has offered for several years now several master's programmes. The fact that we have been able to negotiate such partnerships with highly respected international institutions says convincingly that The College of The Bahamas has earned the respect of the academic world beyond our shores.

I'm pleased to say that we are making more and more progress yearly in fulfilling our mandate to serve the family of islands. We have programmes in running regularly in Andros and Exuma. We operate the Gerace Research Centre on San Salvador and the Bahamas

Environmental Research Centre on Andros. We have a campus in Freeport, one serving 622 students, where we are working towards a new, purpose-built campus east of Freeport on the first fifty acres of a tract of land generously donated by the Grand Bahama Port Authority.

We have also undertaken a number of construction and renovation projects here in New Providence - including the new Performing Arts Centre, the new Wellness Centre and the recent opening of Sbarro's.

We have also increased the volume and prestige of our international outreach through the hosting of conferences such as this year's West Indian Literature conference and our recent Canada-Caribbean one.

We have built an international presence also through our International Languages and Cultures Institute.

We have advanced our Strategic Planning, we are building a strong and effective alumni and development programme, we have received

outstanding lead gifts, including that of \$1M from our Council Chair, but also others which we shall soon be announcing. We have debated and reviewed our governance and Dr. Bethel's report in that respect is due this month. We have worked with one another to define priorities and we have and continue to work to address the challenges of registration.

We stand here today with you our graduates and in much the same way, we take a moment as a community to rejoice in our learning, in our progress, in one another. We know, as you do, however, that this moment of joy is but a brief respite on our journey to be and become our very best.

You have been with us these past years, you have witnessed our successes and have seen when we have stumbled. We have been with you as you have succeeded and perhaps at times stumbled.

It is my dearest wish that the ties you have formed with each other and with the College will bind our futures as well as our pasts. We wish you well on this next part of your journey and we want to see you often. We want to hear from you often. We want you to be our best critics and our best champions as we also take on the next steps of our learning, growth and development.

What breathes life into The College is people — you, our students, alumni, the faculty, families, friends and donors who have supported your studies. This day belongs also to all of you. You have a well-deserved stake in every degree, diploma and certificate awarded here today. I take this opportunity to thank you for contributing your special portion of what makes The College of The Bahamas what it is today and gives us the courage and obligation to reach even higher.

The College like the University which shall succeed it, is and will be the best it can be if it is well-loved, a place of community, a place where we are challenged to have our reach ever exceed our grasp, a

place of service, a place which truly honours its motto : Knowledge, truth, integrity.

As our graduates today, you are in part building your future on what The College has done for you. We are building our future on what all your successes have done for us. We thank you and we honour you.

And may we ever be partners in the service of all that builds stronger, better, wiser people and communities, of all that can and will make a better Bahamas for all.

May God be with you on your journey and may you always come home to us.