

Inaugural Remarks for Faculty Senate Inauguration, January 19, 2001

John W. Jenson, President, UOG Faculty Senate

Universities exist to import the best of the world's diverse cultures to the communities they serve. They also exist to share the best of their communities' culture with the rest of the world. It is this process of universal sharing of science, art, culture, new ideas, and ancient wisdom that provides humankind's best hope for universal and permanent peace, prosperity, and happiness.

The ceremony in which we have all just participated this morning exemplifies one of the outstanding legacies of island culture enjoyed by all of us fortunate enough to live together on this beautiful island in this lovely part of the world—that is, the extraordinary sense of community that enabled the first people to come here to overcome vast oceanic distances in tiny, hand-hewn canoes and to establish an island community that has withstood the ravages of powerful typhoons and earthquakes, colonial conquest, and even the depredations of modern war.

The items bestowed on the newly elected Faculty Senators—the leis, the gavel—are handcrafted, by friends and family members, from materials unique to our island and our region. They symbolize the unique and exquisite heritage that our island and region have to share with the rest of the world.

We, as the elected leaders of the faculty, stand here not as individuals, but as representatives of a community within the broader community of our island—a community of scholars dedicated to the sharing of our own and the rest of the world's great legacies. Our most important means for such sharing, it should be noted, is not the mere dissemination of information in the classroom, but the cultivation and promotion of civil conversation. I quote here from Bartlett Giamatti's essay, "The Academic Mission:"

It is that civil conversation—tough, open, principled—between and among all members and parts of the institution that must be preserved. If it is, a community is patiently built. If it is not, the place degenerates into a center of crisis management and competing special interests. What must be open and free is the conversation, between young and young, young and old, scholar and scholar, present and past—the sound of voices straining out truth.

This Faculty Senate shall be dedicated to the pursuit of truth, and the protection of minority or dissenting or critical views. It will stand for the preservation of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and integrity, and shared academic governance, as embodied in the oath just administered. It shall promote genuine and fruitful cooperation of the faculty and administration to deliver programs of the highest quality to our students and community. It will be a tool—again in the words of Giamatti—for "forging common aims...establishing a common set of goals and values, and laying aside the mistrust that corrodes the capacity to educate the young, to discover and share new knowledge, and to speak to the public of the nature and purpose of an education." We look forward to working with our administration to establish a new era of successful and productive shared governance at the University of Guam for the benefit of our students, our island, and the region.