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December 21, 2025

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UOG Celebrates Graduates with Messages of Purpose, Community, and Impact

The University of Guam conferred degrees to 199 students during its Fanuchånan (Fall) 2025 Commencement Ceremony held Sunday at the Calvo Field House. The event marked the culmination of years of academic effort, resilience, and personal growth for UOG's newest graduates.

Of the degrees conferred, 135 were bachelor's degrees and 64 were master's degrees. Graduates represented academic fields critical to Guam and the region, including education, healthcare, public administration, STEM, and business.

The School of Business and Public Administration produced 59 graduates in accounting, business administration, public administration, and criminal justice. The School of Education conferred 36 master's degrees in teaching, education with specializations, counseling – 14, of which, came from the first graduating cohort of the Master of Library and Information Science.

These programs reflect continued investments in academic offerings that align with workforce priorities across the island and the region.

"As the University continues its growth trajectory, these investments allow us to respond to evolving needs – through newly created degree and certificate programs, expanded facilities, and the development of workforce capacity," said UOG President Anita Borja Enriquez in her welcoming remarks.

Valedictorian Highlights Access, Purpose, and UOG's Impact

Keana Ardiente, valedictorian of the Class of Fanuchånan 2025, who also serves as president of the 64th UOG Student Government Association, used her address to reflect on the role of education in expanding opportunity – particularly for first-generation students.

"I stand here as a first-generation student who once believed 'D's get degrees,'" she said. "But at the University of Guam, I found mentors who saw my potential, and I found my purpose."

She emphasized the importance of inclusion and peer support in academic spaces, calling on her fellow graduates to lead with intention. "My purpose is rooted in making sure no first-generation student feels out of place simply because they are the first to open the door," she said. "We don't just graduate with degrees – we carry forward the work of opening doors for others."

Crisostomo: Island storytelling shapes identity and responsibility

Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist and visual storyteller Manny Crisostomo delivered the commencement address, returning to the University of Guam more than three decades after his first appearance as a commencement speaker in 1989.

Drawing from his career documenting CHamoru culture, Pacific Islander life, and the island diaspora, Crisostomo described storytelling as a professional responsibility – one that preserves history, affirms identity, and informs how communities understand themselves. He encouraged graduates to recognize the value of their own experiences and to approach their work with discipline and accountability.

"This is your day – and don't let anybody forget that," Crisostomo told the graduates, acknowledging the effort required to reach commencement and the support systems that made it possible.

He also reflected on returning to Guam to teach and complete *Legacy of Guam: I Kustumbren Chamoru*, describing how professional growth and cultural grounding are closely connected. His remarks reinforced the importance of applying one's education with intention, whether through creative work, public service, or leadership roles that contribute to the island's long-term development.

Honorary Doctorate Awarded to Julian Aguon

The University of Guam conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to international human rights attorney and author Julian Aguon. A Pulitzer Prize finalist and Right Livelihood Award laureate, Aguon is founder of Blue Ocean Law, a progressive law firm that focuses on Indigenous rights, environmental justice, and self-determination in the Pacific region.

Aguon has argued cases before regional and international bodies, authored acclaimed works such as *The Properties of Perpetual Light* and *No Country for Eight-Spot Butterflies*, and has been a leading voice on issues of decolonization, climate policy, and the rights of Pacific Island

communities. His recognition at the ceremony reflects the University's commitment to advancing leadership aligned with justice, sustainability, and regional empowerment.

Graduates Join Regional Workforce and Alumni Network

The Fanuchanan 2025 4graduates join a global network of more than 22,000 Triton alumni. Many have already accepted positions in government, education, public health, and the private sector.

"As you step forward, remember that today marks more than a milestone – it is a charge to contribute meaningfully to your communities and the world," President Enriquez told the graduates.

The commencement ceremony was livestreamed and will remain available for replay on the University's official YouTube channel.

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Attachments: Photos with captions



2025-UOG-Fall2025-Commencement-graduates.JPG - University of Guam students from the Class of Fanuchånan 2025 stand to be recognized during the commencement ceremony held Dec. 21 at the Calvo Field House. Nearly 200 degrees were conferred in fields aligned with workforce and regional development priorities.



2025-UOG-Fall2025-Commencement-Keana-Ardiente.jpg - Valedictorian Keana Ardiente delivers remarks during the University of Guam Fanuchånan 2025 Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 21 at the Calvo Field House. Ardiente, who also serves as president of the 64th UOG Student Government Association, spoke about educational access, academic transformation, and the role of first-generation students in opening doors for others.



2025-UOG-Fall2025-Commencement-Masters-Grad-James-Whippy.jpg - James Jackson Nemani Whippy of Chalan Pago acknowledges the crowd before receiving his Master of Arts in Micronesian Studies during the University of Guam Fanuchånan 2025 Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 21 at the Calvo Field House.



2025-UOG-Fall2025-Commencement-Manny-Crisostomo.jpg - Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Manny Crisostomo spoke to graduates during the University of Guam Fanuchånan 2025 Commencement Ceremony held Dec. 21 at the Calvo Field House. Crisostomo delivered the keynote address and reflected on Pacific storytelling, culture, and professional responsibility.



2025-UOG-Fall2025-Commencement-Julian-Aguon-President-Enriquez.jpg - Human rights attorney and author Julian Aguon is presented with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by University of Guam President Anita Borja Enriquez during the Fanuchånan 2025 Commencement Ceremony held Dec. 21 at the Calvo Field House. Aguon was recognized for his regional and international legal advocacy on decolonization, climate justice, and Indigenous rights.