



PRESS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Jonas Macapinlac
Chief Marketing & Communications Officer
University of Guam
Tel: (671) 735-2944
Cell: (671) 787-1010
Email: jmac@triton.uog.edu

23 nursing students graduate early to assist in pandemic response

The first, and likely most emotional, ceremony for this year's University of Guam graduates took place via video conference on Tuesday, as the university recognized its nursing graduates who will enter the workforce during an ongoing pandemic.

All 26 graduates chose to accelerate their coursework to complete their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree requirements one month early in order to more quickly join the island's health care workforce, though three are finishing up the clinical portion of the degree and will graduate as scheduled next month.

"When we asked if any of you would be willing to accelerate to finish early... we were hoping for maybe 10 of you to step forward," said Associate Professor Kathryn M. Wood, who chairs the nursing program, during the ceremony. "And every one of you stepped forward."

The graduates can now apply for a Graduate Nurse license with the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners to begin work. Prior to becoming registered nurses, they will need to pass the National Council Licensure Examination, or NCLEX, which they can take starting in June.

UOG President Thomas W. Krise shed light on the recently accentuated value of the health care profession.

"This is as memorable as it gets," he said. "This crisis has emphasized that health care is really the basis of everything we do. Our economy and everything we want to do is

dependent on the quality of our health care ... and we are so proud of our graduating nursing students and our faculty and staff.”

Anita Borja Enriquez, senior vice president and provost at the university, commended the graduates on the completion of a rigorous degree.

“I want to thank all of you as new graduates for your resiliency, your passion toward your profession, and your willingness to join your colleagues in our health care profession on island,” she said.

The students, who tuned in to the video ceremony from their homes wearing peach Class of 2020 graduation sashes, responded with smiles, applause, and tears as they received heartfelt congratulations from their professors, who offered the following advice:

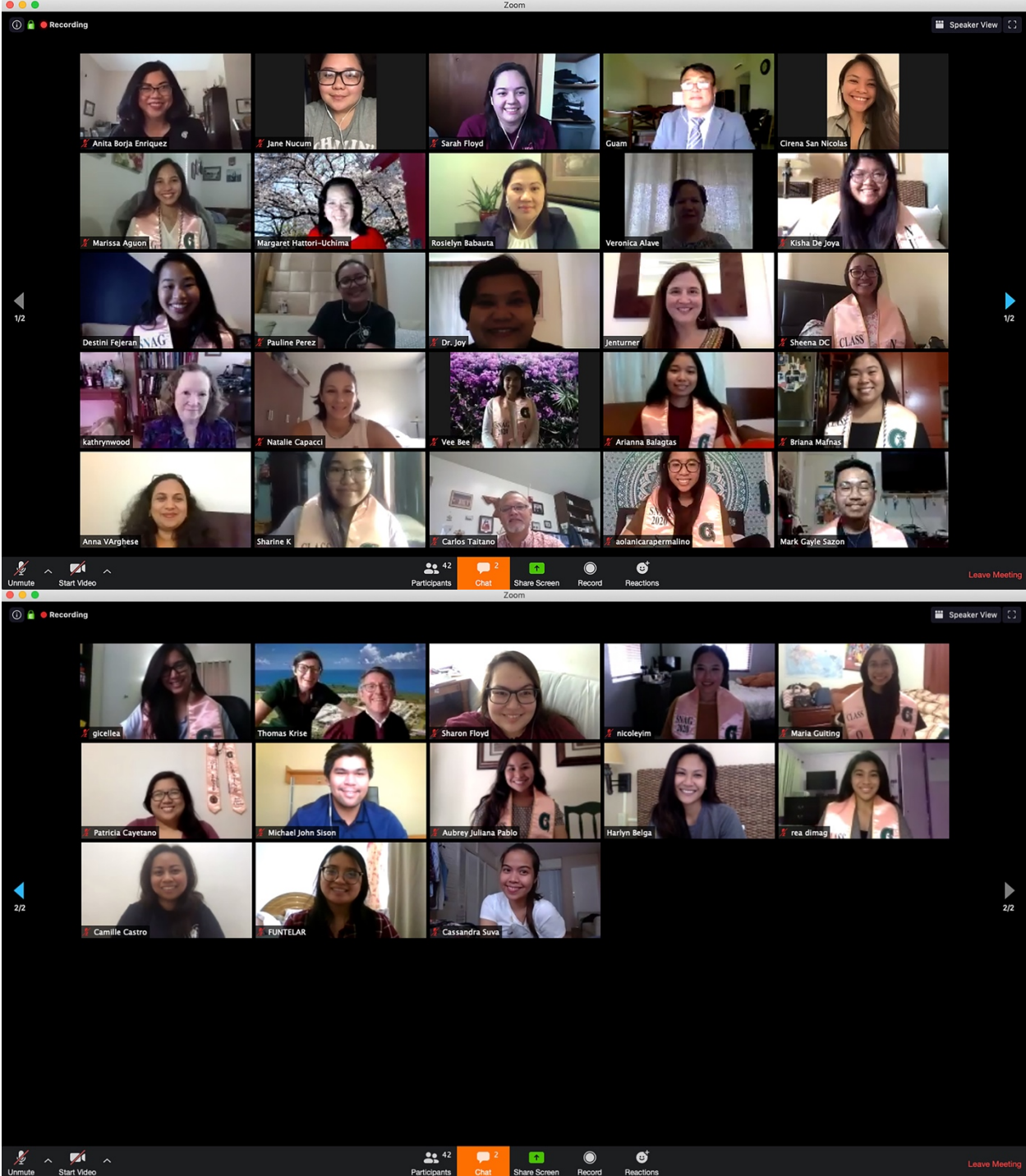
- “Passion and compassion will be your weapons against fear and indifference.” — Margaret Hattori-Uchima, dean of the School of Health
- “You don’t realize the difference you will make in someone’s life ... With the uncertainty of this pandemic, you can give them answers to their questions.” — Veronica B. Alave, instructor of nursing
- “With this pandemic experience, you will learn different things and will look back later and say, ‘I’m so glad I went through it. It made me strong, and it made me an excellent nurse.’” — Rosielyn B. Babauta, instructor of nursing

Three graduates were awarded with special recognitions in their cohort. Destini Fejeran received the Excellence in Leadership Award. Arianna Balagtas received the Excellence in Clinical Practice Award. And Pauline Perez was recognized with the Excellence in Theoretical Knowledge Award.

The class of nursing graduates will engage in a traditional pinning ceremony with family and friends at a later date and will join their fellow University of Guam graduates for a virtual commencement ceremony on Thursday, June 18.

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Photo captions:



2020-nursing-grad-recognition 1 and 2

Class of 2020 nursing graduates from the University of Guam, along with UOG administrators and nursing program faculty, smile for a group photo following a virtual graduation recognition ceremony on May 5. The students opted to accelerate their final semester and graduate one month early in order to join the health care workforce in the COVID-19 response effort.



2020-nursing-students-snu

Seniors in the University of Guam nursing program take a group photo in the Guam Memorial Hospital's Skilled Nursing Unit in Barrigada. The students helped prepare the facility last month to house COVID-19 patients.



2020-nursing-students-homeless-coalition

(From left) University of Guam nursing seniors Cirena San Nicolas, Aubrey Pablo, Marissa Aguon, and Rea Dimag assist at a Guam Homeless Coalition event.

Photos courtesy of the University of Guam