



**Ms Zoe Turner, BA Media Journalism '26
Governor General's Award Recipient - Valedictorian
University of The Bahamas Spring 2026 Commencement
Ceremony
Nassau Cruise Port, Amphitheatre, Downtown Nassau
28 May 2026, 7:00 p.m.
Remarks**

Good evening, everyone.

I stand firstly on established protocol and give honour where it is due.

Tonight, I am deeply humbled, incredibly grateful, and honestly still trying to process the fact that I have the privilege of standing before you as Valedictorian for the Class of 2026.

To my fellow graduates, congratulations. We did it!

More than 600 of us sit here tonight because we refused to give up. We persevered through long nights, deadlines, exams, uncertainty, exhaustion, sacrifice, and moments when we questioned whether we were truly capable. Yet here we are; stronger, wiser, and forever changed. Our graduation theme says it perfectly: "Honouring the Journey that Shaped Us, Embracing the Future that Calls Us."

Like many of you I started my studies at the University of The Bahamas during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; meaning masks, social distancing, online classes, fear, and uncertainty. And like many others, I had to eventually leave the comfort of my home as a Family Island student and relocate to Nassau to pursue my education at the Oakes Field Campus.

That transition was not easy, but in spite of the times of loneliness, doubt and homesickness, and somewhere between the lectures, the group projects, the stressful assignments, the endless walks across campus, and the late-night study sessions, UB slowly became a place of community, friendship and purpose. You helped to bring me here.

UB also gave me the opportunity to grow beyond the classroom. Through my study abroad experience in Canada, I was able to broaden my perspective, experience a different culture, and realise just how interconnected our world truly is.

I also had the privilege of serving as a work-study student in the Department of Communications. That experience taught me responsibility, professionalism, creativity, and the importance of service and the power of communication to inform, inspire, and connect people. More importantly, it allowed me to build meaningful relationships with individuals who poured into me, believed in me, and encouraged me to become the best version of myself. I also want to mention my time with the Music Department – the Concert Band and Choir. It made my time at UB all the more fun and memorable.

The University of The Bahamas has profoundly impacted my life. This institution did not simply educate us, it prepared us. It taught us to adapt, think critically, persevere, and perhaps most importantly, rise to the challenges that life will inevitably place before us.

To my fellow graduates: never underestimate how far you can go from where you started. I used to think "I'm just a girl from Cat Island". But humble beginnings catapult you to a powerful destiny. Just ask the giant-slayer, David. And look where I'm standing now.

So let us move forward with hope, optimism and the understanding that the world does not simply need more degree holders. It needs people willing to serve something greater than themselves; who will to build our society, our nation and the world.

I could go on but time is short.

Before I close, I want to thank my family, especially my parents, Denny and Ethel Turner, for their unwavering support and for always pushing me toward excellence, even when I resisted it. Thank you to my sister, Erin Turner, a former Student Trustee and graduate of the Class of 2025, for setting such a powerful example of hard work, discipline, and determination.

To all my professors, especially in Media Journalism, thank you for challenging me, believing in me, and helping me grow. Your investment in your students matters more than you know.

To the friends I met along this journey, thank you. I want you all to know: every conversation, laugh, shared struggle and encouraging word mattered more than you probably realise.

And above all, I thank God for His faithfulness throughout this entire journey. All I can say is God has been so, so, so faithful and if you've been walking this journey without Him, I'm glad you made it this far. But I promise it'll be even better to continue with Him in your corner.

There were moments when I did not know how things would work out, but somehow, He always made a way.

To the Class of 2026...this is not the end of our story. This is only the beginning. Congratulations, graduates!

May we honour the journey that shaped us and boldly embrace the future that calls us.

Thank you.