



Mrs. Allyson Maynard Gibson, KC
Chairperson, Board of Trustees
University of The Bahamas Spring 2026
Commencement Ceremony
Nassau Cruise Port, Amphitheatre, Downtown Nassau
28 May 2026, 7:00 p.m.
Remarks

“Honoring the journey that shaped us; embracing the future that calls us.”

Although protocol has already been observed, allow me to extend a very warm welcome and acknowledge those with us this evening:

- Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Education, Science & Technology the Hon. I. Chester Cooper,
- Members of the Executive and Legislative branches
- Members of the Board of Trustees,
- President Blaine and the Executive Leadership Team,
- Guests, and
- The Commencement Class of 2026

Good evening.

Commencement Class of 2026, you look absolutely beautiful out here tonight. Give yourselves a round of applause. You earned this moment.

And parents, families, faculty, and friends, you deserve some applause too, because many of you graduated emotionally, financially, spiritually... and through group projects you never officially signed up for.

It is truly a privilege for me to be here with you as we celebrate this special milestone.

Many profound moments in our lives cause us to pause and reflect. Commencement is one of them. In moments like this, when you hold in your hands the symbol of years of hard work and achievement, you cannot help but look back.

You think about how far you have come. You think about the nights you pushed through when you were tired. The deadlines. The exams. The presentations where PowerPoint decided to test your faith at the very last minute.

You think about the people who stood quietly in your corner when things were not easy: parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, mentors, lecturers, those who encouraged you, prayed for you, and sometimes reminded you to actually submit the assignment before midnight.

And yes, above all, you give thanks for how far God has brought you.

On one level, what you have achieved is deeply personal. The milestones. The friendships. The knowledge and skills you now carry. All of it matters, and all of it belongs to you.

But if we take a step back and look again, something bigger comes into view.

You are a transformational ripple in the ocean. You are living proof of what happens when a community and a nation invest in its people. You are the hope our country leans on and, in many ways, the answer our country has been yearning for.

That is not a small thing. It is a very big deal, especially at this defining point in our national growth and development.

You have been nurtured at the University of The Bahamas, whose mission is clear and uncompromising: to support and drive national development through education, research, innovation, and service.

That means your story has never been separate from the story of this nation. It has always been tied to it.

And as UB embraces a paradigm shift that lifts standards across every area of our work through accreditation and continuous improvement, so too are you called to live and lead with excellence. Carry yourselves in a manner worthy of the investment made in you, because the world will not only hear your words, it will watch your example.

So tonight, I want you to see yourselves differently.

You are not only graduates.

You are builders.

Builders of communities.

Builders of industries.

Builders of ideas.

Builders of solutions.

Builders of a future that is still forming, but already full of possibility.

Former South African President Nelson Mandela once said, “Youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow.” And I would add this: the future is not something young people inherit passively, it is something you shape actively, courageously, and every single day.

Every contribution you make becomes part of our national story and our global impact. That is why we are so deliberate, as a university, about our mission, because we do not exist for ourselves. We exist for the nation’s future.

And tonight, that future is sitting right here in front of me.

Now, if I could leave you with one thought tonight, it is this: do not wait to become the future. You are already stepping into it.

Honour the journey that shaped you. Do not rush past it. Do not forget what it cost you to get here, and how your families, your communities, and this nation will benefit from what you have gained.

Let that journey ground you.

And embrace the future that is calling you — to lead, to innovate, to reimagine, and to serve.

Embrace it with responsibility.

Embrace it with courage.

Embrace it with humility.

Because along the way, you will impact lives in ways you cannot yet imagine.

And know this: your UB Mingo family, led by our deeply committed and visionary President Dr. Robert Blaine, is

cheering you on. We believe deeply in your potential, we support you and we expect great things from you.

Now, it is my distinct honour to introduce someone whose life reflects the belief that education is the doorway to possibility.

Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Science and Technology has carried that conviction throughout a lifetime of service, knowing that education is a pathway to opportunity, dignity, and national transformation. The DPM, an alum, has acknowledged the role that UB played in shaping him. He repeated this yesterday, when he visited with the Board and the UB Leadership team, as his first official visit as Minister. Today, he has come full circle. The COB graduate, a proud alum, is our Minister of Education, Science and Technology.

Please join me in welcoming the Honourable I. Chester Cooper.

Thank you.