

Good evening parents, friends, faculty, staff, distinguished guests, and current students. Thank you for coming out tonight to support and cheer on the achievement of my fellow class of 2023 graduates of Kaua'i Community College. It is an absolute honor for me to be standing here today and speaking on behalf of this fantastic class.

My name is Earl Dwayne Martin, and I am graduating with my Associate's Degree in Accounting. I will be furthering my education at the University of Hawaii West Oahu. It is very ironic for me to be standing here tonight and giving a motivational speech because, throughout my journey to obtaining my associate's degree, I have never ONCE stepped a single foot in a classroom at Kaua'i Community College. Due to the pandemic situation, I was not able to take in-person classes. Since I was fully online, I did not get to know my classmates or instructors as I would have liked. This is why this ceremony is such a special event, where we finally have the opportunity to meet the instructors who dedicated their time and effort to teaching us the materials we all need to thrive. Thank you, professors, for being patient with us and understanding our unexpected situations; your actions and kindness don't go unnoticed.

The theme for this year's commencement is "I am a wind-resisting 'a'ali'i; no gale can push me over." It is very evident that we all have struggled in different aspects throughout reaching our degrees. Still, your being here tonight shows that you pushed through those challenges and remained resilient through those hard times. Despite the pandemic, where we all had to change our ways of life and learning, we kept our goal intact and adapted to the change. At one point, we all questioned whether or not we wanted to keep going because of the stress and time required to complete assignments and learn the required material. Still, we held our heads straight and remembered the reasons why we were pursuing the careers we have chosen. Through the change of learning, we all have mastered the art of procrastination. Assignments,

tests, and exams get published on Mondays, and are due on the following Sunday at 11:59 pm, yet we do them on Sunday and get everything done by 11:58 pm.

I am a wind-resisting 'a'ali'i; no gale can push me over. Throughout my whole elementary school journey, I was never academically driven. I was being tutored from left to right by different people, but I was too playful and never learned or gained anything from those sessions. I would make my parents cry because I was one of the slowest students in class and frequently did not pass my tests. Through those times, I knew my parents were disappointed in me; however, they never failed to still show me love and provide me words of encouragement. As time went by, I realized the value of education and started to put extra effort into learning. From then on, I planted my feet on the ground and pushed myself beyond my limits and capabilities, regardless of the obstacles that came along the way. I owe an extra thank you to my parents for helping me grow to the person I am today and being patient throughout my evolution.

Finally, I would like to leave you with a little accounting knowledge. We have implemented the main accounting equation in our life, which is $\text{asset} = \text{liability} + \text{equity}$. This fundamental accounting equation serves as a reminder of the importance of balance, not just in bookkeeping but also in life. We have managed to balance school work and our personal lives regardless of the numbers that kept throwing us off. Whether you decide to further your education or go to the workforce after this, we will still be practicing balance in our everyday lives. Knowing how to balance time is crucial in the real world, and you have achieved that skill, along with your pursued degree. Congratulations, fellow class of 2023!