

I Am Resilient Like the 'A'ali'i Bush

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## I Am Resilient Like the 'A'ali'i Bush

The theme for this year's commencement is "I am a wind-resisting 'a'ali'i; no gale can push me over." Each of us has faced many difficulties and challenges in our educational journey. Being here in our caps and gowns shows our dedication and perseverance to overcome those difficulties and challenges. We have pushed through the hard times, and I am so proud of each and every one of you. I am truly honored and blessed to be representing the University of Hawaii Distance Education Programs as your student speaker. Every student has their own unique personal story. I stand before you today to share mine.

Believe it or not, I originally wanted to become a nurse. But life had other plans for me, and I ended up enrolling as a business administration major. After taking a four-year break from nursing school, I would have never thought that I would go back to school let alone college. I dropped out of nursing school in 2016 because, unfortunately, I didn't pass one class. I was so close to moving on to my second semester of nursing school. But that didn't stop me from continuing my educational journey, and I returned to school in 2020.

During that four year break, I was busy being a mother to my three kids while trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. One of the greatest challenges during that time was separating from my ex, but the support from my family and friends and my own will power brought me back on my feet. The Covid era brought back some free time in my life, and I was inspired to continue my education and finish school to obtain my bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in management.

Obtaining my degree via distance education has benefited my life in so many ways. It was convenient and flexible. Being a single mom of three children, I could complete my

homework wherever. I could study at my own pace as it was doable while staying home with the keiki. I saved time driving to and from a physical location and was able to spend that quality time with the ones I love the most. It felt like I was able to enjoy the special and meaningful moments that mattered the most. Obtaining this degree sets me up for success, and I can take this knowledge with me and implement it in my career. I am grateful that I got to complete my internship at my current employer and blessed that the position I am currently in relates to my business administration degree.

The University Center supported me by making sure I stayed on track throughout the school year and sending me resources and the tools to make my educational journey just a little bit easier. The advice that I give to students interested in pursuing a UH online degree while staying on Kaua'i is to never give up. Never give up on your hopes and dreams to pursue that degree, whether it be an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or working your way up that degree ladder. It is possible. You may face many challenges, but that's how life is; and it is how you react to life's struggles that will decide the outcome.

If you have a positive mindset and a can-do attitude, then I believe that many blessings and opportunities will come your way. Take me for example, I started my college journey after high school in 2012-2013, and slowly but surely finished my prerequisites for a higher degree. I took about a four-year break from college because life happened, but I never gave up and pushed myself to finally complete my bachelor's degree after eleven years.

It aligns with this year's theme: "He 'a'ali'i ku makani mai au; 'a'ohe makani nana e kula'i," a boast meaning "I can hold my own even in the face of difficulties." The 'a'ali'i bush can stand the worst of gales, twisting and bending but seldom breaking off or falling over. We may bend, fall, or break, but as humans, we are resilient. We get back up to fight back and overcome

any obstacles that may come our way. We do this to reach success and to reach our fullest potential. I applaud you class of 2023; we have made it this far. Congratulations and we did it!