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“Ka ipukukui pio ‘ole i ke Kaua‘ula.” The light will not go out despite the blowing of the Kaua‘ula wind. This ‘Ōlelo No‘eau, or Hawaiian proverb, talks of the lights of Lahainaluna, where many of our old Hawai‘i leaders learned. Despite the strong Kaua‘ula winds, they never extinguished those lights. Quite honestly, I had a hard time writing a speech based on this ‘Ōlelo No‘eau’s translation, but the more I read, the more it triggered a different thought process. I began to look at the light as the knowledge we have gained throughout our life. I saw the wind as a symbol of the adversity we face. The inability to extinguish these lights signified our resilience, or in other words, how many times we recover what we learned despite our difficulties.

When I think of the light, the knowledge, I have acquired in my life, I think of "A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi," which translates to "not all knowledge is learned in one place." Hawaiians understood that each opportunity in life is a lesson even if you have already been taught something from another hālau. Reflecting on my 34 years of life, I realize I learned the value of working hard from my parents and grandmother. All of these tremendously helped as I earned my three degrees, but even more so when I developed new skills as I pursued my bachelor’s degree and master’s degree entirely online. From my marriage, I learned that good things don’t just happen, but when you have something that makes you happy, it is worth putting every effort forward and not taking any of it for granted. I learned from my husband, Aaron Carvalho, that even good people make bad choices, but it does not make them bad. I learned from our oldest child, our son Hepunahēle, the value of resiliency. I learned from our second child, our angel Makoā, who lived only 50 days, that life is short. But even more than that, 50 days is more than others may have, so be grateful for every second you have with your loved one, not disappointed in the time you could not have with them. I learned from our youngest and only daughter Pua to never say never because you will always be proven wrong. I learned that school is full of lessons that don’t just pertain to your future careers but life in general. I learned that work’s reward isn’t a paycheck but a change you make in other people’s lives. Most of all, I realized that I didn’t have to leave Kaua‘i to pursue my bachelor’s degree or my master’s degree. Like a light burning despite the wind, this knowledge gathered throughout my life has sustained me in the face of adversity.

When I think of adversity, I think of "He ma‘uka‘uka hoe hewa." This ‘Ōlelo No‘eau translates to "a person from the uplands, unskilled in paddling." Although it doesn’t directly talk about adversity, this ‘Ōlelo No‘eau speaks of the effects of not being exposed to different skill sets. Many adversities are a result of not having the right skill set to deal with an issue. I know many of you have taken your first online course within the last year. Like you, my journey exposed me to new and different skill sets throughout all my distance learning that helped tremendously for my master’s project. I found this ‘Ōlelo No‘eau as a great reminder for my participants during my master’s project that learning new skills can help us overcome adversity with the right skills. This mindset helped to build the foundation for my research on a web-based workshop for personal statements. The biggest takeaway I wanted students to gain from my project is that a personal statement is a student’s story--a story that only the student can share. I empathized with

these students by sharing my personal statement or my story. Titled “Shattered Dreams,” it talked about the many dreams that have been shattered in my life. It spoke of the hardships I went through growing up in Anahola. It spoke of my dream to leave Kaua‘i, but because UH Mānoa overbooked dorms, I remained on Kaua‘i for my entire life. It spoke of my dream of completing college promptly but instead taking 17 years to earn my master’s degree in large part because I became a mother at a young age. To clarify, getting pregnant at 19 years old with our first son and 14 months later with our second son was never something I regretted. If it wasn't for being a mother so young, I honestly can't imagine being where I am today. As a mother, I hope my children are older than I was when they become parents, but I know from my experience that it is not always a bad thing to let their cards fall where they may. My dreams were shattered again when our second son passed away from SIDS at 50 days old. It spoke of wanting to provide the best life for our family, but coping with the loss of our son caused adversity in our marriage in ways that I never imagined. All of this happened as I completed my last year of my Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration with a Concentration in Accounting by distance learning from the University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu. In those five years, our family also experienced homelessness, the effects of drug use, a loved one incarcerated, and a marriage on the brink of divorce stemming from the lack of skills needed to avoid these challenges. However, by pushing through these adversities, we developed skills to overcome each of these difficulties.

Finally, I would like to think of the light not being extinguished by the wind as the resiliency developed by the many adversities that did not extinguish the knowledge gained throughout our lifetime. To best share my experience with this, I would like to read a paragraph from my personal statement.

Despite these shattered dreams that became a pattern in my life, I now know that these experiences helped me to be the best Student Support for The Wai‘ale‘ale Project that I can be. My job is to support students at Kaua‘i Community College that also experienced shattered dreams. It was during my role as Student Support for The Wai‘ale‘ale Project that I realized my shattered dream of leaving Kaua‘i allowed me to complete my degree at Kaua‘i Community College. Plus create many meaningful relationships that benefited me when I first applied at Kaua‘i Community College as the Financial Aid Specialist. My shattered dreams of finishing my degree on time allowed me to network with individuals that saw my worth during a time that I did not. Now I can do the same for my students. My shattered dreams of providing a better life for my family allowed me to see that even good people could make bad choices, and this did not have to determine my future, and it should not determine our students’ future. I then realized that my shattered dreams were God’s way of breaking me, the person I thought I should be, so He could rearrange these pieces to create a reality I never thought was possible.

When I allowed God to control my life, the adversities I faced diminished. In the last six years, my marriage to my best friend continues to flourish. I am glad to say that my husband saw the impact of his drug use and his absence while being incarcerated, and it continues to motivate both of us to do our best every day. Now, our life is not perfect, but we are perfect for each other because we continue to allow ourselves to learn despite what life throws our way. Most recently, this resiliency paved the way for us to buy our first home in March 2021, a dream I thought would never become a reality, but God continues to show me that when I give my worries to

God, the unbelievable happens. For me, my resiliency lies in knowing that God has control of my life because I chose to let go and let God. This has been a motto that has guided my life by reminding me to let God have control.

All of the knowledge I have gained over the years continues to help me be the best person I can be. No matter how much wind or adversity has tried to extinguish the person God wanted me to be, the light or the knowledge I have gained continues to shine brighter than ever. With this mentality, I have completed my Master's Degree in Learning Design and Technology through the college of education by distance learning from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I will continue through life by becoming more resilient despite the challenges I have yet to face. I hope that this speech can give you the motivation to persevere through any adversity you may face and build resiliency in the face of adversity. Like the light that continued to light where the leaders of old Hawai'i learned, let the light gained from our knowledge continue to shine despite our adversities through our resiliency.