Aloha, my name is Gillian Perdido, and I am a nursing student and proud member of the Class of 2026 at Kauai Community College (KCC). When I think about our theme, “Take wisdom and make it deep,” I don’t just think about learning, but I think about perseverance. For many of us, the journey to get here was not straightforward.

For me, it meant not getting accepted the first time, still choosing to apply again, and not giving up on myself. If I’m being honest, I sometimes questioned myself. I wondered if maybe this just wasn’t meant for me. But that “yes” came here, at KCC. I decided to leave home on Oahu and move to Kauai, not knowing exactly what to expect, but knowing I couldn’t stay where I was. That decision changed me; it taught me resilience, gave me purpose, and helped me grow in ways I never expected.

Over time, what we learn does not just stay in our minds; it becomes part of who we are. That is what it means to “take wisdom and make it deep”. We learn how to push through challenges that once felt impossible. We learn how to adapt, stay grounded, and support one another. Somewhere along the way, we became more than just students; we became a community. Some of us balanced school, work, and family. Some faced loss, doubt, or moments where quitting felt easier, but we are still here. As we graduate, we carry more than knowledge. We carry the experiences, the struggles, and the growth that shaped us into who we are today. For me, this is only the beginning. I look forward to continuing my education, growing in my career, and one day giving back to this community, just like it has given to me. Because sometimes, all it takes is one opportunity, one “yes,” to change everything.

To the Class of 2026, no matter how long your journey took to get here, you made it, and that matters. This wasn’t about finishing a program; it was about becoming the kind of people who don’t give up. Mahalo to our families, our mentors, and this community for believing in us. And to KCC, thank you for the opportunity.

Congratulations, Class of 2026. We didn’t just gain knowledge; we learned how to take wisdom and make it deep.