

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Feeling Accomplished: UVI Graduates Over 100 Students On St. Croix

Education / **Published On May 14, 2015 11:34 AM /**

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ST. CROIX -- A packed tent of faculty, staff, friends, family and well-wishers sat for over 3 hours to celebrate with the University of the Virgin Islands Class of 2015, called the 'Legendary Gifted Achievers', as they received their degrees and celebrated the next leg on their path to success.

For some, that meant more school, but for others, graduating on Wednesday at the Albert A. Sheen Campus, meant plunging right into the marketplace of opportunity with degrees in various sectors, including the School of Business, School of Education, School of Nursing, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, among others.

UVI President Dr. David Hall welcomed the graduates and their supporters, and noted that it was the first time the university's commencement ceremonies began on the St. Croix campus.

Hall also recognized the dignitaries present at the commencement, among them Governor Kenneth Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, Sen. Neville James, president of the 31st Legislature and other members of the senate present at yesterday's event.









































































































































































Hall saluted the class of 2015 and told them that UVI remains proud of their accomplishments. He said the students' decision to pursue higher education took "vision and courage," adding that, "through your dedication and hard work, you have achieved what many will only dream."

Making way for the event's keynote speaker, Hall welcomed to the podium Marian Wright Edelman, a lawyer, writer, activist and children's advocate, who delivered a powerful speech to an attentive crowd.

Edelman, who grew up under difficult circumstances, noted her father, a Baptist preacher, and her faith in God as pillars that drove her to success. Although he died when she was only 14, Edelman said her father taught her self worth, so when the outside world told her she had no value, she did not believe it.

"The childhood message I internalized was that as God's child, no man or woman can look down on me, and I can look down on no man or woman," she said.

Later, Edelman reminded the new graduates that nothing in life comes easy, and that the degree they've earned would only carry them so far. Hard work, dedication and continuing even when there seems to be no reason to do so, is what will lead to success, she said, adding that, "there are no free lunches in life."

Following the speech, Hall awarded an honorary doctorate to Edelman, which was followed by a musical selection, and speeches from James, Plaskett and Mapp.

With certificates in hand, the students welcomed the most exciting part of the commencement: The Presentation of Candidates.

Pride and joy flooded their hearts along with a sense of accomplished. The graduates marched to the stage to be presented to the world -- some danced, others laughed -- all looking as if the weight of completing the diligent task of earning one's degree was finally behind their backs.

It was coming to a close, then. But not before the students strode past onlookers on a tile carpet and onto the open grounds to be congratulated with hugs, balloons and gifts from friends and family. *The Consortium* spoke to two graduates.

"I'm very excited. It was a long journey here and I'm proud to be here," said Lynysha Farrell. "This is one step to another step as I'm trying to go to grad school, and it's just wonderful to finally get my bachelors of science in biology."

Farrell, who said she has 5-6 more years of schooling, is pursuing a career in biomedical research with a concentration in neuroscience.

Theo L. Sutherland, a graduate of the School of Business with a concentration in business management, said he felt "great" to have finally received his degree, and added that "it's always a liberating feeling when you accomplish something, especially when you've worked so hard for it."

Asked if he planned on remaining on island, Sutherland said he'd love to stay here if an opportunity became available. Otherwise, he would pursue employment on the U.S. mainland.

Senator Kenneth Gittens, who *The Consortium* spoke to following the commencement, congratulated the graduates, and said that, in relation to employment, there were a number of funded vacancies that Governor Mapp's nominees spoke of during recent hearings, and his hope was that the new graduates would fill said openings.

The senator also made mention of Mapp's campaign promise to hire 1,000 workers upon entering office, and highlighted this year's graduating class as the right time to start with the employment.

Ceremonies continue today in St. Thomas at the the Sports and Fitness Center on the St. Thomas Campus.

For more details, go [here](#).

