

Speech of Hon (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun
Minister of Education and Human Resources
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Prize Giving Ceremony Universal College
15 September 2016

Protocol

Good Morning to all of you.

Thank you for welcoming me to your institution on the commemoration of the 55th Anniversary of Universal College. I note that this commemoration is being articulated around a three-pronged set of activities-- a Prize Giving ceremony, the opening of a new Physics laboratory and, especially, the conferment of the Rohit Bolakee Award. Nobody can deny the contribution of the late Rohit Bolakee, MBE, to the education sector. He founded this College in 1961. Today, with hindsight we realise he was guided by a genuine philanthropic vision to spread the light of knowledge and bring education at the doorstep of the people of Riviere du Rempart and its neighbourhood.

It is undeniable that the school has well fulfilled its vision and mission. True, it has had its ups and downs-- but at the end of the day, it has made prolific strides and emerged as a forerunner in the providers of private secondary education in this part of the island.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear students,

I am especially happy to note that this School has spared no effort in living up to the philosophy of my Ministry. Thus, it has demonstrated that it does not only cater for the academic development of its learners but also continually places high stakes on their holistic development.

Universal College is indeed a learning institution that values all its students equally, recognizing their different aptitudes and providing opportunities for refining their abilities and shaping their attitudes. The environment and ethos are conducive to their physical and psychological growth while, I am told, the Educators here apply themselves very conscientiously to the task of unleashing their students' full potential.

This, we know, is absolutely vital for our children to grow as balanced individuals and responsible members of society.

The active participation of the community of parents in the children's welfare is also noteworthy. I am glad that the parents tend to cooperate fully with the school's management and staff—all of which contributes in no small measure to making Universal College a success story.

Ultimately, it is these parents who are setting the wrong example to their children. Learning to be responsible and to behave responsibly has to start from the home front.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Nobody can deny the importance of improving the learning environment. If we are to lift teachers' and students' aspirations, we must raise the infrastructural bar very high.

In short, we have to ensure the right type of physical surroundings and the appropriate equipment and tools are provided for learning. Indeed, to prepare our learners for the modern world, we need to provide education in a modern setting with all the technological benefits this can provide.

Here I must congratulate and commend the laudable endeavour of the school in providing a brand new Physics Laboratory to teach this very important subject in the upper forms. I am certain that you, students,

will avail yourselves of the vast potential your school is offering to you to equip yourselves for a bright future.

In fact, I will seize this opportunity to make a strong plea for a study of the Science subjects.

Biology, Chemistry and Physics along with Math are, in one way or another, the subjects on which the future is to be built. The world over, the talk is about the importance of what is known as STEM disciplines, i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. In fact, many of the 21st Century skills – problem solving, critical thinking, collaborative work...---are inherent in STEM disciplines that are known to drive Innovation. It is universally agreed today that a STEM-literate citizenry is best equipped to address the challenges of our modern times.

Obviously, dear students, I am not telling you to neglect other subjects. Your school does provide you with a palette of subjects to choose from. Make the most out of these, make the most of the knowledge acquired. Subjects like Marine Science, Travel and Tourism, Design and Communication, Art and Design, Law and others offered by Universal College are a signpost for brighter future prospects.

Let me also express my appreciation for the actions of the Rector and Manager of this College in ensuring the active involvement of students in Co- and Extra-Curricular activities. I know your school has taken part in numerous activities organized at all levels--local, regional, national and even international where, I am told, the school has bagged several prizes.

But if there is one thing that warms my heart, it is the partnership that the school has struck with other schools in the neighbourhood. I really

hope to see this partnership now going beyond the organization of competitions and similar events.

Inter-institutional student and pedagogical exchanges should be one of the highlights of Universal College. I would really encourage you to be the pioneer in this drive.

Incidentally, let me also add that, through the changes being brought about where private secondary schools are concerned, my Ministry is fully aware of the need for such schools to retain their specificity. We are fully aware of the tremendous contribution of Private Secondary Schools in the Mauritian Education landscape. I am resolved to give all of these schools the relevant means for them to contribute to the cause of Education.

Dear Students,

Let me congratulate all of you who have participated in the various inter-college competitions organized by the school this year in the context of its 55th anniversary. I know that, through hard work and determination, many of you have exceeded your own expectations. That, in itself, must give you great satisfaction.

Congratulation and well done. I wish you to remain committed and dedicated to what you are doing, to get involved, to be trustworthy and dependable and to show respect for others so that they can in turn reciprocate.

Do continue to shine and be the pride of your school as well as that of your parents.

Good luck to you in all your ventures.

Thank you for your attention.