



Opening Speech Academic Year

University of Aruba 2025-2026

Governor, Excellencies, Members of Parliament, Members of the University Council, esteemed faculty and staff, distinguished guests, University of Aruba students, ladies, and gentlemen— Good evening, Today we gather for a moment of great significance, the opening of a new academic year and the installation of Mrs. Sue-Ann Lee as the new Rector of the University of Aruba.

Ladies & Gentlemen, universities are the heart of progress of a country. They are where knowledge is discovered, tested, and shared. They are where future leaders are educated, where ideas are debated, and where innovation takes root. They are the places where curiosity meets creativity, where theory becomes practice, and where learning fuels the design of better futures.


Higher education is therefore not only about degrees and diplomas. It is about preparing minds to think differently, to question deeply, and to act courageously. It is about nurturing the innovators, the problem-solvers, and the visionaries of tomorrow. It is a living laboratory for innovation—whether in sustainable tourism, renewable energy, governance, technology, health, or culture and even sports. It is where students can explore new solutions, where researchers can anticipate change, and where partnerships can open new opportunities for Aruba, the region, and the world.

As Minister in charge and the government, we want to establish research labs that will connect academy with industry and government, focusing on areas that matter most for Aruba's future—education, sustainability, digital transformation, health, wellbeing, and finance. We want to continue building pathways for students to access regional and global opportunities, so that talent developed here can thrive everywhere, while also bringing back knowledge, experience, and networks to our island. Education must not only be for the few, but it must also be for all who have the drive to learn and to contribute.

Mrs. Lee, in your new role as Rector, you have the privilege and the responsibility to steer this University at a crucial time. The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities. You inherit an institution with a proud history and a vibrant community. Now, under your leadership, it must also become a university of the future—one that is globally connected, regionally relevant, and locally transformative.

Your leadership will be measured not only by the quality of research and teaching, but by the impact the University makes on the lives of students and the society it serves. It will be measured by how well it prepares young people not only to find jobs, but to create them; not only to adapt to change, but to drive it; not only to succeed individually, but to contribute collectively.

To the students of the University of Aruba: you are not only learners, but you are also innovators. The future of this island, and indeed of the wider region, rests in your hands. Your studies are not just about passing exams. They are about acquiring knowledge, skills, and imagination to make a difference.



To the faculty and staff: you are not only educators, but you are also mentors, guides, and partners in innovation. Your task is to nurture not just intellect, but also character. To inspire not only competence, but also conscience.

Let us therefore commit, together, to building an ecosystem of innovation in Aruba—where universities, industries, government, and communities work hand in hand; where research informs policy, and policy enables creativity; where education fuels not only careers, but also citizenship, solidarity, and sustainability.

Mrs. Lee, congratulations, may your tenure be marked by courage, vision, and a deep commitment to innovation through education. May the University under your leadership continue to shine as a beacon of learning, creativity, and progress—not only for Aruba, but for the world. To all gathered here today, let us remember: Education is the seed, if we nurture the seed, the fruit will flourish—for our students, our society, and our shared future.

Best wishes to you all, each year is a new beginning, new opportunity, let's make great things happen together and celebrate tonight. I hereby declare the new Academic Year OPEN.

Thank you.

Minister Gerlien L. Croes LL.M.

Minister of Kingdom Relations, Education,
Youth, Innovation and Sports.

