

BIBA UOG – A PROFESSIONAL LIFE AT UOG

Robert A. Underwood, Ed.D. President Emeritus

1. Brief Personal Background Information:

- Robert Anacletus Underwood
- Married to: Nerissa Bretania Underwood

2. Brief Academic Background Information:

- BA, MA History- Cal State University Los Angeles
- EdD, University of Southern California

3. Year that your UOG Employment Started/Year UOG Employment Ended/Duration of Employment at UOG:

- December 1976- March 1992
- May 2008-August 2018 as President of the University

4. Highest Academic Rank You Held and Your Major Field/Academic or Administrative Position(s) at the time of retirement:

- Academic Fields: Social and Cultural Themes in Education; Bilingual Education; CHamoru Language; Education Administration
- Academic Rank: Professor of Bilingual Education
- Administrative Positions:
 - Project Director, Bilingual Education Assistance in Micronesia (BEAM)
 - Dean, College of Education
 - Academic Vice President
 - President

5. How were you recruited by UOG? What in particular brought you to UOG? Instructor, Bilingual Bicultural Teacher Training Program

- Recruited by Professor Bernadita Camacho-Dungca. I was working as a Vice Principal at the Guam Department of Education and was working on a number of community projects related to language and culture.

6. What UOG was like at the time of the beginning of your employment as you remember?

- It was an institution with a significant enrollment of students from the Trust Territory (Micronesia); Classrooms were focused on Buildings A and B; spirited group, a little insecure about its quality as an institution. There were only a handful of CHamoru professors. Sometimes, we would try to meet to figure out how we could improve the numbers at the institution.

7. Your legacies are sought to be remembered as part of the 70-year history of UOG:

- Longest serving President of the University
- Initiated the Center for Island Sustainability; started chanting “Biba UOG” in public events; with Cathleen Moore-Linn, we established the Big G; oversaw two record accreditation reviews of eight years each with Senior Vice Presidents Helen Whippy and Anita B. Enriquez; secured highest levels of external funding

- -Started Bilingual Bicultural major; organized regional service center called BEAM and enriched UOG/COE regional presence; College of Ed reformulation project

8 Special Memories of UOG – Teaching, Courses Taught, Field Trips, Field Schools, Research Projects, Conferences, Programs, Events, University Service, Community Service, Community and Regional Outreach and Engagement, Administrative Activities, Committee Activities, etc.:

- CHamoru Studies Convention
- Organized several Institutes over the interim semesters for teachers from Guam and around the region for bilingual and English as a second language preparation
- -Project BEAM – hired several field representatives including Tony Tawerilmang and Manny Sound. Tawerilmang later became Lt. Governor of Yap and Sound became Lt. Governor of Chuuk. Established a regular and systematic presence for the University in professional education throughout the region.
- Dean College of Education, Reformulation of the program majors, initiated 3rd year entry process into education majors
- Academic Vice President- emphasized regional positioning, negotiated articulation agreements with community colleges in the region

9. Academic Awards, Special Professional Recognitions, etc.:

- Member of the National Advisory Council of Bilingual Education (federal level appointed during the Carter Administration)
- First President of the Pacific Island Bilingual Bicultural Association formed on UOG Campus
- Member of the National Board of Educational Sciences (appointed by President Obama)
- Trustee of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress (appointed by Speaker Pelosi)
- Lifetime Achievement Award, Guahan Humanities Council (2004)
- Citizen of the Year, National Association of Bilingual Education (1996)
- Achievement Award, Asian Pacific American Institute of Congressional Studies
- Presidential Merit Award, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Republic of the Philippines

10. Notable Publications or Creative Work Pieces, Workshops, Special Lectures and Seminars, etc. to be remembered:

- Numerous publications in journals and magazines on CHamoru Language, bilingual education, Micronesian politics.

- Invited speaker to East West Center, Harvard University, Georgetown University, UCLA, University of the Philippines and numerous other institutions over the years.

11. Special Colleagues, Students, and Staff as well as Administrators:

I cannot forget Dr. Bernadita Camacho-Dungca. She and I fought over many issues, but she was the colleague who gave me the opportunity to work at the University of Guam. Over the years, I remember Dr. Wilfred Leon Guerrero who selected me to be Dean of the School of Education and Academic Vice President. Dr. Leon Guerrero is the only person I willingly called “ma’gas” or boss. My closest friend over the years was Dr. James Craig. I have to say a special word about Dr. Helen Whippy whom I competed with to become President and who subsequently gave absolutely stellar support to the University and to me as Senior Vice President. At the risk of forgetting the hundreds of people I worked with, I have to give my gratitude to faithful and excellent service by Christine Mabayag, Terri Leon Guerrero and Patricia Camacho Borja.

12. Public Service and Engagements to be remembered:

- As President of UOG, I started the Presidential Lecture series to offer the opportunity for the University and broader community to hear distinguished individuals discuss ideas which elevate, illuminate and inspire others. Whether the speaker was a poet, a member of Congress, a cabinet secretary, an ambassador or a champion of martial arts, the University became the venue for great ideas and ideals.
- I was Chair of the Chamorro Language Commission for 10 year (1979-1989)
- I was a founding member and first Chair of the Asian American Pacific Islander Scholarship Fund. Now labeled APIA Scholars, this fund has awarded dozens of scholarships to students in Guam and Micronesia to include Gates Millennium Scholarships.
- As an activist, I helped organize the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R) and was the first presenter on behalf of Guam at the United Nations.
- As an activist, I also chaired the Micronesian Education and Solidarity Conference in 1982.

13. Advice or Words of Wisdom for current and future professors or administrators:

- The University is involved in a search for the truth, no matter how inconvenient or difficult.
- The University of Guam remains the only University north of the equator that has a Pacific Island focus and regional mission which is part of its institutional DNA. This purpose must continue to be the basis for carrying out research, teaching and service programs.

14. Year you joined SEPRS

I believe 1999.

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