

# URBAN VOICE

SUMMER 2017

## HE'S HEADED TO COLLEGE

With Your Help,  
Pete's Seizing  
the Future





**WE** rejoice and celebrate as we honor our Class of 2017 Seattle Urban Academy graduates! And I want to celebrate *you* as well for your continued faithfulness in supporting our graduates on their journey. I can't tell you enough, how encouraging it is to have people like you praying for and supporting all of our students every day.

In this issue, you'll meet graduating senior, Pete. He once doubted whether he would even finish high school but now he's heading to college and prepared for what's to come. And you'll get to hear from the rest of our graduates about what SUA has meant to them, and see how recent SUA graduate Essance is forging ahead.

*He once doubted whether he would even finish high school but now he's heading to college and prepared for what's to come. ”*

Thank you for being a supportive family for our diverse and courageous young adults as they go forth to new life outside the walls of SUA. Each one of them is a precious creation in Christ. My prayer is that you're blessed as you celebrate with them, and know that your gifts are being used by God to uplift these students as they rise up to shine upon their communities and bless others.

With joy,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon Okamoto". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sharon Okamoto  
Executive Director and Principal











A student's senior year is often the time when they take it easy. But for SUA graduating senior Pete, it meant taking a chance and uprooting himself to join a community where he could be his best. At the start of his senior year, he decided to transfer to SUA.

"I felt like my old school really couldn't get me far enough," Pete said. "I really wanted to be focused, especially when it came to my surroundings and the people I hung out with."

He felt challenged when visualizing what life after high school could look like and wanted to be an even better person. And after learning

*I feel now that I have a clearer vision of what my life can be and what it can be worth.* ”

about SUA from several of his friends who attended, he knew it was the right fit.

**"I'd heard good things – not just about the school, but about what programs they offered and their career preparation. And the teachers teach you about life and help draw you closer to God."**

Since coming to SUA, Pete's gained a greater sense of purpose. The future isn't so much looming ahead as it's an exciting opportunity.

**"Since coming here, I've changed because now I know what to do with my life," Pete explains. "I feel now that I have a clearer vision of what my life can be and what it can be worth. My attitude and my work ethic have definitely changed too."**

As Pete looks forward to the future, he's heading to Orange Coast College in California where he'll be playing football. After college, he hopes to join the Marines.

**"Honestly, for a while I wasn't sure I would see the day where I would graduate," Pete says. Now, I'm excited to get that diploma."**

Through your generosity, students just like Pete are realizing their potential and their value in Christ. Thank you for supporting them!

## GRADUATES SPEAK

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*You have faithfully walked alongside SUA students, supporting their every footstep toward a future filled with hope and purpose. Now, we celebrate them together, giving thanks to God for their accomplishments and praying that God will use their talents, gifts, and abilities for a higher purpose.*

**ON BEHALF OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2017, THANK YOU!**

*Sharon*

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### **KATIE CERRONE**

*"I wasn't doing well at my old high school, so I came to SUA because I wanted a change. Once I got here, my attendance improved, and my grades were up. I finally had hope for graduating. I was comfortable, and felt safe here.*

*After graduation, I plan to attend Bellevue College and work toward a degree in Early Childhood Education."*



### **PETE FALANA'I**

*"SUA students TJ Mauigoa, and Jeremiah Sio told me how SUA would help me draw closer to other people and to God. They said that at SUA, everyone is not only friends, but also brothers and sisters. That sounded good to me.*

*The teachers and staff kept me at SUA. They really care about your life, and not just school.*

*After graduation, I will play football at Orange Coast College in California, and transfer to a university. After football, I want to join the Marines, and be a mechanic."*



### **AVEMAOE LEOMITI**

*"I wasn't on top of schoolwork at my old school. I heard about my cousin coming to SUA to change things for herself, and my best friend was also going to SUA. It helped me realize how loving the people are here, and how much more motivated the students are. Everyone treats each other like family.*

*I stayed at SUA because of the love and support that the awesome staff members showed me since day one! The staff and my peers never gave up on me when I slacked off. Instead, they got in my business and pushed me 24/7. I never got this kind of love from any other school.*

*After I graduate, I plan to take a gap year to work, live on my own, and handle my responsibilities. The following year, I will go to college."*



### **MARISOL SANTOS-PEREZ**

*"I came to SUA because my grades at my previous school were not up to my standard. I wanted an environment that felt more one-on-one. A teacher with 32 students in one class wasn't right for me.*

*I stayed at SUA because of the opportunities I have been provided here.*

*After I graduate from SUA, I will work with the elementary and middle schoolers over the summer. I plan to attend South Seattle Community College in the fall."*



### **BRAEDEN SIO**

*"I came to SUA because I had a cousin who was going into his senior year here. Also, my dad heard about the opportunities SUA can provide for students. I like the small class sizes at SUA; it helped me focus on my work. My teachers actually helped me when I asked.*

*I plan on attending Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, pursuing Marine Biology. After I receive my associate's degree, I'd like to travel, visit Samoa, and get hands-on work across the country."*



## The Future is Bright for Essance

**T**he hard-working and talented students that graduate from SUA continue to pursue God's calling to higher ground.

SUA class of 2015 graduate Essance recently completed an intense three-month study abroad semester in Tanzania where she was able to take courses and immerse herself in a different country and culture. She's a political science sophomore at Whitworth University and says that SUA equipped her for life after graduating from high school.

**“One of the best things about SUA was the help I got in choosing a career path,”**

**Essance says. “The support from staff is huge. It’s been really amazing when I compare my experience to my peers. They’re confused or dealing with things that I immediately know how to handle.”**

That support helped her merit scholarships, transition to higher education at Whitworth University and be selected as one of 16 students for the trip. She was able to take courses in biology, political science, Swahili and more while visiting different major cities.

**And as if that weren’t enough, Essance is a summer intern for the King County Prosecutor’s Office.**

“I’m really getting to do a lot and getting great experience,” Essance said. “I’m doing everything from sorting legal records to watching

attorneys to sitting in on active trials.”

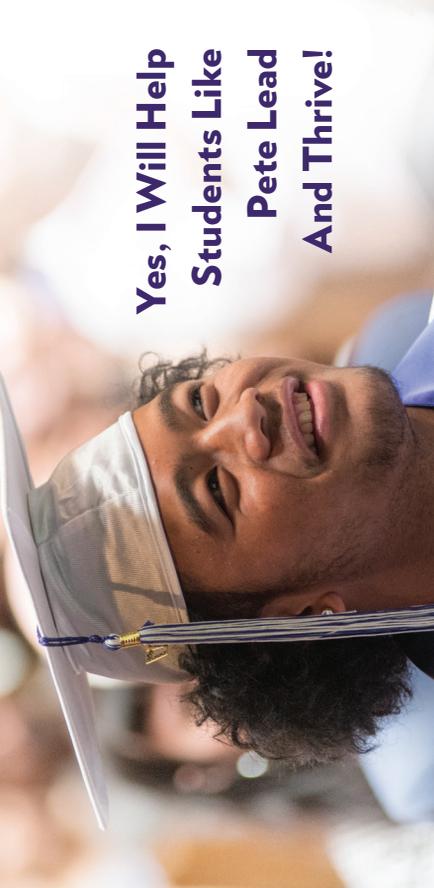
And she’s getting to give back. She’s interested in working in criminal reform for youth, in part inspired by her experiences at SUA.

*Over 90% of SUA graduates go onto higher education or sustained employment.* ”

“Recently, I was helping an attorney lead and coach a mock trial like I did when I was at SUA. It was refreshing to be back in the courtroom.”

**Because of your support, education at SUA draws out their passions and equips them for the future. Like Essance, graduates are taking what they’ve learned to transform their communities and create a promising tomorrow. Thank you!**





# Yes, I Will Help Students Like Pete Lead And Thrive!

A gift of \$27 provides one hour of education for an SUA student. When you support students like Pete, you're equipping them with the personalized education and career development they need to grow and become leaders.

Enclosed is my gift of:

- \$54 for 2 hours
- \$162 for 1 day
- \$810 for one week
- \$1,600 for 2 weeks
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help as much as possible
- Make my contribution a recurring monthly gift

**Donate now: [sua.org/graduate](http://sua.org/graduate)**

## TURBAN VOICE

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