



SPEECH

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

EVENT: 65th Anniversary of Universal College

VENUE: Universal College, Riviere du Rempart

DATE: 29th May 2026

TIME: 10.00 hrs

Hon Ministers Members of the National Assembly

Distinguished Guests,

Representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Private Secondary Education Authority,

The Director of PSEA, Mrs Boolauky Aryawatee,

The Manager of Universal College, Mr Oudesh Bhowon,

Former Managers and Rectors,

Members of Staff, Alumni, Parents and Students,

All Protocol observed

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

Thank you for your kind invitation to attend to-day's function.

Thank you also for the warm and special welcome

Very special and Happy Occasion

Happy the 65th Anniversary of Universal College.

My warmest congratulations to the management, staff, students, alumni, parents, and all stakeholders who have contributed, over the decades, to the growth and success of this institution.

Thank you for **65 years of commitment,** service, resilience, and educational excellence.

Throughout history, in all societies and civilisations, Education has played and continue to play a pivotal role in the progress and prosperity of nations.

Education remains the most powerful instrument for not only for national development, but also for social mobility, and human empowerment.

Paying Tribute to the Founder

On this special occasion we must remember and pay tribute to everyone who believed in the power of education and made it accessible, especially to those who may have been denied access due to economic or social circumstances

As Universal College celebrates its Sapphire Jubilee today, we honour a remarkable journey that began with the vision of one man and grew into an institution that has transformed countless lives

We must remember and we must pay tribute to the **visionary founder** of Universal College, **the late Mr Rohit Bolakee, M.B.E.**

Like many of his contemporaries, in 1961, at a time when access to secondary education was still limited for many children from rural and modest backgrounds, he opened the doors of this institution in Rivière-du-Rempart with courage, determination, and **a deep belief in the transformative power of education.**

Yesterday I was in Goodlands to pay my tribute to late Mr Harris Bachwa and Mr. Ramchurn Coomar Bachwa,founders of Friendship Boys College.

Universal College began with only a few classrooms and five teachers. Today it is one of the leading educational institutions in the northern region of Mauritius.

The founder's vision went beyond academic achievement. He believed in **education as a means of uplifting communities**, shaping responsible

citizens, and creating opportunities for young people who otherwise might have been left behind.

His legacy continues to live through the thousands of students whose lives have been transformed by this institution.

Celebrating Academic Achievement: Miss Lorna Intrépide

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy and proud to learn about the recent outstanding performance of Miss Lorna Intrépide, ranked 13th nationally in the Arts stream at HSC 2025 - a shining example of dedication, perseverance, effective mentorship, and hard work.

Her testimony reflects the culture of support and encouragement that exists within this institution.

Her success also reminds us of the crucial role played by teachers and families in shaping the future of our young people.

(Round of applause)

To all the students of Universal College, I say this: believe in yourselves, remain disciplined, and never underestimate your potential.

Success is not measured only by examination results, but also by character, integrity, resilience, and the willingness to contribute positively to society.

Changing needs, Growth and Excellence

Over the last 65 years, I also understand that Universal College has continuously evolved to meet the changing needs of society.

From its **first rented premises** on the Royal Road in Rivière-du-Rempart, the institution gradually expanded its infrastructure, introduced HSC classes, invested in science laboratories and specialist rooms, and

obtained **ISO 9001 certification as part of its commitment to quality education.**

The college also distinguished itself nationally through excellence in extra-curricular activities and community engagement.

What is particularly admirable is the institution's holistic approach to education.

Universal College has always sought not only to produce academic achievers, but also disciplined, compassionate, creative, and **socially responsible citizens.**

Its environmental, cultural, literary, sports, and philanthropic initiatives demonstrate **a strong commitment to community service and nation-building.**

The Future and Education

As we celebrate this milestone, we must also reflect on the future of education.

We are living in a world shaped by **rapid technological change**, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and new economic realities.

Mauritius is gradually transitioning towards a **knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy while facing key challenges like climate change, energy crisis and food security.**

Our schools must therefore prepare students not only for examinations, but also for innovation, critical thinking, flexibility and adaptability, and lifelong learning.

Institutions such as Universal College have a vital role to play in preparing the next generation to face these challenges with confidence and responsibility.

At the same time, we must remain attentive to **important challenges affecting our education system**, including **indiscipline, bullying, substance abuse, and student well-being**.

These issues require a **collective response** involving educators, parents, policymakers, and society as a whole. We must ensure that **our schools remain safe** and nurturing spaces where every child can flourish.

Appreciation to Staff, Alumni and Parents

I would also like to pay tribute to the teaching and non-teaching staff of Universal College, past and present.

Your contribution extends far beyond the classroom. You are mentors, role models, and guides for future generations.

The long-service awards being presented today are therefore deeply deserved and meaningful.

To the **alumni** of this institution, you are the **living ambassadors of Universal College**. I encourage you to remain connected to your alma mater and continue supporting future generations.

To parents and families, I express my sincere appreciation for your **sacrifices, encouragement, and support**.

Education succeeds best when schools and families work together as one team and one community.

Special Tribute/Personal note

Many of you may not be aware that I am myself a product a Private Secondary College, of this very constituency-the Northern College which unfortunately has closed down. My wife is also a product of a private Secondary College.

Since this is my very first function at a Private Secondary School. I want to take this opportunity to also pay a special tribute to all founders and

Managers of Private Secondary Colleges for the invaluable contribution in the education sector.

At a time when education was not free, they came forward and invested in a sector which did not yield high returns. They played a pioneering role in shaping the destiny of thousands of children and youth, among whom, today, you have the 8th President of our Republic.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This anniversary is not only a celebration of the past, but also a renewed commitment to the future.

May **Universal College** continue to grow **from strength to strength**, *inspiring generations of young Mauritians* through excellence, discipline, compassion, and service.

I once again extend my heartfelt congratulations to the management, staff, students, alumni, and all those associated with this great institution.

Thank you for your kind attention.