

My NECC Commencement Speech

By: Marie Phillips

Thank you President Glenn, for that amazing introduction, and welcome, NECC faculty, staff, families, and class of 2014!

The Northern Essex Community has always made me feel like a superstar. The fact that I always felt welcomed and supported in the college community has really inspired me to strive for great things.

Many of the students who are graduating today may know me as a student who is very involved on campus, and who studies hard, in the effort to achieve excellent grades. But, I have not always been the super-dedicated student who stands before you today. As President Glenn stated, my first attempt at being a student at NECC only lasted one semester. At the time, I felt that I could simply work full-time, and skip the college experience. I soon found that without a college education, it was very hard to find a good job that paid well. Also, the employment that I was able to find just didn't make me feel fulfilled, and I think that is an important quality for a job to have.

During my high school years, and during that one semester spent as a student at NECC, I majored in Early Childhood Education, and I absolutely loved it. I find teaching young children to be extremely fulfilling, and I learn as much from them as I hope they are learning from me. I suppose one could say that teaching young children is my bliss. It makes me happy, and I feel that it is what I am meant to do.

I learned something important during those thirteen years spent away from NECC. I learned that I am perfectly capable of working at other types of employment, and of doing my job well, but if at the end of the day I don't feel fulfilled, well, what is the point really?

So, after thirteen years spent away from the world of academics, I vowed to find a way to go back to school at NECC. I needed to follow my bliss. It certainly has not been an easy path. I have worked harder than I would have thought possible, but I wasn't alone in my efforts. I had many wonderful people in my life who have helped to lead me on my path, and who have picked me up when I tripped and fell. My family has been amazing. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Girls Inc. Program. I know that my daughter is in good hands with them, while I am at school. My daughter has been such an inspiration to me. I really want to be someone who she can look up to and be proud of. And today is her birthday, so Happy Birthday Kayla! I know that I wouldn't have accomplished as much as I have without the PACE Program. And the friendships that I have made through the Student Leadership Development Program and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society are ones that I hope will be life-long.

So, the knowledge that I have gained through my life-experiences, that I want to share with all of you today is this, do what makes you happy, follow your bliss, and build a life for yourselves that leaves you feeling fulfilled at the end of the day. You may try out life-paths that you discover you don't enjoy, and that's o.k. too. Now is the time to try out new things, and to find what truly makes you happy.

Thank you.