2021 Student Commencement Speech

STEM Ceremony at 3 pm

Vladimir Ventura of Lawrence, AS: Computer Information Sciences: Computer Science Transfer Option

Good morning everyone, and congratulations to class of 2021. We did it! We survived our lives, a year of online classes and Calculus 2 to get here, so we should all be proud of ourselves! My name is Vladimir Ventura, I am a Computer Science major, I was born in Dominican Republic, and it is an honor for me to be part of this class, even more so when it is full of so many talented students.

I would like to share a bit about my experiences before and after joining NECC, and what these taught me about life.

I wanted to register for college as soon as I graduated from high school in the Spring of 2015. I was 17 years old, and my plan was to register for the upcoming Fall semester, so I could finish my career as young as possible. My goal was to graduate by the time I would be 22 years old. Life, however, had other plans: my high school had issues with my paperwork, that year's Fall registration deadline was past and that meant that I would have to wait until next year. After our USA Visa application process was done, we migrated to Lawrence, MA in July 2016. In my eyes, I had lost a year by then.

By mid-August 2016, a family member suggested that I attended NECC, and I started the registration process right away. I took the entrance exam and had acceptable scores, which meant I would not have to take the introductory English course. However, life does not always go as planned. To register for classes, I needed a Massachusetts ID that proved I had been a resident for at least 6 months. Naturally, the 2016 Fall and the 2017 Spring deadlines went by, and I had yet again lost another year.

 I had missed a total of two years of my life without making any progress towards my career goals. I started thinking that it might never happen, that it might be too late for me to start college, or that by the time I graduate, I would have a hard time finding a job. I felt desperate; I was not making any fruitful progress in my career. In retrospect, I focused too much on the time I had lost already, without thinking about the things I had done before I was finally able to attend college, and the motivation to study that I felt while being out of it.

While in Dominican Republic I went to driving school, which allowed me to get my Massachusetts driving license after moving here. Having my license gave me a lot of freedom and made getting a job easier. Being in different jobs before and during college helped me hone my skills of working with customers, and teamwork. During my time working in a warehouse, I met some of my best friends! They taught me how to open up and socialize with people, and just have fun in general!

I finally became an NECC student in Fall 2017, and ever since then I have enjoyed being part of the "student life" I was so eager to live. I did not mind staying up all night to finish homework, waking up at 6AM for work, leaving work at 2PM to drive from Tewksbury to Haverhill for a 3PM class during my first year because it made me feel alive. All these years of wait finally made sense; I felt complete! Through NECC I have met so many good friends, learned so much in classes, went to an internship in 2019, and realized that coding, or problem solving in general, makes me truly happy.

After joining NECC, it took me almost four years to realize that sometimes in life, things just take their time to come. Be it fast, or slow, eventually things will happen; and when they do, it is important not to rush them, but to enjoy them. Time is never really lost; the events that happen while we are waiting often have a hand in helping us achieve our goals. Lastly, it is never too late to start something new, or to resume an old ambition, motivation can help us achieve our goals.

In closing, I would like to thank my parents for their unending support, Michael Penta, Jay Termini and Kristen Sparrow for being amazing teachers, Adriana for some very, very last-minute coding interview practice, and finally Ethel Schuster for believing in me and pushing me to apply for Hack.Diversity, a program that supports underrepresented minorities in the Technology field. Through this program, I got my very first Software Engineering internship in the Summer of 2019 at Liberty Mutual. And this year I'll be attending my third internship at the same company. I want to especially thank the people at Hack.Diversity, and to encourage my peers to apply to this program! Thank you, everyone, for believing in me before I believed in myself.