

PRESIDENT:

Good morning and welcome to our 59th Commencement Ceremonies! Graduates, are you ready for your diplomas?

Before we get to that, I extend to you my most heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Bronx Community College faculty, staff, and alumni. I would also like to bring greetings from those who tirelessly support BCC and our good works. Before the program begins, I would like to introduce you to our guests joining me on stage. You will hear from a number of them this morning.

Trustee Fernando Ferrer is here today representing the CUNY Board of Trustees.

Trustee Ferrer, thank you for your continuing support of CUNY and BCC.

I would also like to acknowledge the elected officials and public servants who honor us today with their presence.

They have tirelessly supported us and the mission of our college for years. Please join me in welcoming:

- New York Senator Chuck Schumer
- New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera
- New York State Assemblyman Victor M. Pichardo,

and

- New York City Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson.

I would also like to thank our Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. and New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera for all that they do for BCC. They were not able to join us today, due to other conflicts, but send their best wishes.

I want to extend a warm Bronco welcome to families, friends, and loved ones sharing this wonderful day with you. They went through college with you. They believed in what you could achieve and offered help to achieve it. Graduates, if you are able, please stand and join me in thanking your loved ones.

Of course, we want to welcome our esteemed faculty and staff. They listened, shared, advised, cared for, and mentored you – and yes, sometimes nudged you and cajoled you – but all of it was to support you on your journey to this day. Will all of the faculty and staff who are able please stand for us to recognize you.

Graduates, you are here this morning because you set goals, remained committed to them, and devoted your time and energy to studying and doing the hard work. You made the

sacrifices. Now, commencement is the celebration of the completion of this journey. Today is one of the most important moments at BCC since your first day of class.

Our lives are made of individual moments – both big and small. We are confronted with obstacles that we must overcome. We face challenges we must learn to master. As parents, children, spouses, friends, and individuals with countless responsibilities outside of the classroom, you stayed focused and persisted. You made it when others did not. You showed your grit and determination and told the world, “I will succeed.”

What a powerful image for those around you. Just take a look. You have defied the odds and are here today proudly showing that you are the future of our nation.

2019 graduates, you are an incredibly diverse group. You are 37% male and 63% female. You come from 48 countries around the world. 943 of you participated in ASAP – the Accelerated Study in Associates Program. That’s 43% of all the graduates today. The youngest among you is 19 and the most senior is 76.

27 of you are veterans or still in active service. Please stand so that we can thank you for your service to our amazing country and for the special spirit you brought to our campus during your time here.

95 of you are BCC employees and, like many of you, juggled coursework with career. Please stand, so that we can recognize you.

And many of you balanced academics with athletics as Broncos. Will our student-athletes please stand.

What you all accomplished with us in these past years, you will also achieve in the world beyond our gates. You will wrestle with obstacles and rise to challenges using the knowledge and lessons learned throughout your courses of study and you will succeed. Life's not easy and the journey will not always be a smooth one, but when you wonder whether you can do it, remember to pause and reflect. Reflect on BCC. Reflect on your accomplishments and those who support you. You've already done it here and you can do it anywhere.

As you have triumphed here, I have no doubt you will triumph in your new roles as cherished alumni and impressive ambassadors of Bronx Community College. If you haven't already, find something you love to do. Spend the time working to be better at that thing than anyone else around. Trust me, you'll never be bored and you'll always

find success. There is no passion to be found in playing small or in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living. I cannot wait to see where you go and what you do. And you are always welcome to come back home to Bronx Community College to share your journeys with those who come behind you. Congratulations again to you, the graduates of 2019!