Dr. Hercules Pinkney’s 2010 Montgomery College Commencement Address

Today is truly my proudest moment as a College president. Just like you, I have been waiting for this day for months. Just like you, I’ve been waiting, and waiting, and waiting.

It brings me tremendous joy to look out and recognize so many smiling faces. I see our graduating students, parents, families, and friends. I see elected officials, friends, and supporters of Montgomery College.

I would like to recognize a few people in the audience and ask them to stand and wave when I call their names.

- Mrs. Camille Kendall – philanthropist and former teacher and artist.
- The Honorable Jennie Forehand…I’m not sure if she arrived or not.

I want to thank you all for joining us today for this memorable occasion.

Because of the support of the Montgomery College Board, Foundation Board, Alumni, donors, and our elected officials, the College achieves its mission of changing lives.

You – the graduating class of 2010 – are proof of the positive impact that Montgomery College makes on the community. I look forward to shaking hands as you cross this stage and welcoming you as alumni. But first, let me tell you a little about the Class of 2010.

Most of you came to Montgomery College from Montgomery County Public Schools – from Montgomery Blair, Sherwood, Einstein, Magruder, and many others. Others came from as far away as California before settling in Montgomery County and enrolling at Montgomery College. Some of you attended high schools abroad, and others took high school classes on their computers or in their family rooms – as homeschooled students. And a few of you took alternate routes to get to MC, by earning your GED.

The class of 2010 is also diverse in age. Several graduates were born when Harry Truman was president, and a few who were not even a twinkle in your parents’ eyes until just 18 years ago. Yes, we have some Montgomery College graduates who are only 18 years old. For another graduate, it took 27 years of hard work to earn an associate’s degree. Congratulations to all of you!

No matter where you started your journey, all of you have overcome challenges to reach your destination – this stage today.

Think about it. To get to graduation, you likely spent hours away from home, listening to professors, studying in the library, working with classmates on team projects. You may have even worked harder than you ever had before, trying to find an original idea that would impress your favorite professor.

You may have scrimped and saved to afford your education. You may have sacrificed sleep to squeeze in a few extra hours with your family and still make your assignment deadline.

I know the College’s faculty and staff will celebrate your successes today. For them, this has been a year of unusual challenges as well.
We had a change of leadership that brought me out of retirement and to this position of interim president. We faced our largest enrollment ever as the community suffered from the recession. Montgomery College helped by offering affordable tuition and quality education when people lost their jobs or their savings.

We battled the “snow-apocalypse”, spending two weeks digging out of two blizzards. And now, we must cope with county and state budget reductions and the prospect of operating three campuses with funding only for only two.

However, yesterday the County Council restored $4.4 million to our FY11 operating budget. This will allow us to open our Rockville Science Center and hire additional teachers so that we don’t have to turn away students seeking higher education opportunities.

Through all of the challenges, the faculty and staff of Montgomery College have remained…actually fully committed to your success – making sure you achieved your educational goals.

Please join me in recognizing the dedicated faculty of Montgomery College!

I will look back on my time as interim president and know that commencement was a significant milestone in your future and in the future of the College.

I will conclude by asking you – the graduates – to complete two final homework assignments. You thought you were done, huh?

First: take great pride in your Montgomery College education and feel confident that you are well prepared for the next stage of your journey through life.

Second: when you succeed in the next stage of your journey, and notice I didn’t say “if”, I said “when” – you succeed, give something back. Use your experience to make the path easier for those who will come after you.

Give something back to honor the people who made your success possible – your family, your professors, your friends, your classmates – all of whom contributed to making you the person you have become.

When you give something back to help others, you magnify the value of your education a thousand times over.

I look forward to hearing about your future accomplishments!

Let’s take one last look back at this academic year and some of the lives that were changed at Montgomery College.

VIDEO PLAYS

With great anticipation of what’s to come, I say...Congratulations, Class of 2010!