

Shanna Guy's Commencement Speech 2021

Good morning everyone! I want to begin by thanking President Glenn for the kind introduction. Faculty, friends, family, and fellow graduates, I am honored to be here with you on this momentous day.

Words cannot even begin to explain the overwhelming feelings of relief, excitement, and satisfaction I have right now. We all have been anxiously waiting for this day to come for a very long time, and to get here, we had to conquer so many things. Long days of classes, longer hours of studying, sleepless nights, and other obstacles. On top of all of that, most of us had to adapt to an entire new form of online learning this past year.

A lot of us never thought this last semester would end but we survived. It is funny because I honestly could not wait for it to be over but as soon as I submitted my finals and finished everything, I realized that I am saying goodbye to one of the biggest and best chapters of my life.

My journey at Northern Essex Community College has not always been easy, but it has certainly changed me for the better in so many ways. As I share my story today, I hope that some of you will be able to connect your own personal journey to mine.

When I graduated from Amesbury High School in 2011, I was dealing with a lot of stress, juggling two jobs, and not really thinking about my future. I felt pressured to go to college, so I decided to stay local and came here to sign up for classes. Naïve and unaware of how much time you had to put into each course, I became a full-time student.

I can remember skimming books and cramming in material the morning of a test. Trying to rush and get my homework done in my car right before classes would start. My grades were not at all impressive, but I just kept trying to manage everything because deep down I really did want to thrive in school.

Halfway through my second semester, I had completely failed or been withdrawn from my classes. At this point, I was on academic probation and I did not even want to think of school anymore. I was devastated because I knew that I could have done better. I just was not prepared for college or in a position to succeed.

When I turned 25, I started dwelling on the fact I did not finish my degree. I finally had my own apartment and I had saved a good amount of money throughout years of working hard at tedious jobs. I felt stable and mature at this point, so I went back to the student center at Northern Essex to finish what I originally started.

I decided to start off slowly by taking one class at a time. I was not sure if adjusting to the school routine would be challenging again but surprisingly, I hit the ground running. This is when I realized that my past mistakes were necessary for me to see my future more clearly. The lessons that I learned made me perform at a whole new level.

I was finally being recognized as a high-performing student and became more involved with programs at the college. Through these experiences, I have had the opportunity to build meaningful connections with classmates, faculty, and staff.

One particular relationship that I am extra thankful for today is with Professor Donahue. Not only has she invested her time in me and presented me with opportunities I never thought were possible, but she inspired me to be the best student that I could possibly be.

Overall, my journey at NECC has taught me that with perseverance and determination, you really can achieve anything. It has allowed me to better myself as a person not just academically, but also emotionally and mentally. I have gained so much self-confidence here and learned so much about myself.

Although moving on can sometimes feel bittersweet, there is a brand-new beginning waiting right around the corner for us. Whether you go on to find a job in your field or transfer to a four-year college, our journey will not end here. My goal is to continue my pursuit on earning a higher education and I cannot wait to see what the next chapter has in store for me.

Business and Accounting graduates, congratulations! Things have finally come full circle. I hope we can all take some time throughout the day to absorb and savor everything that is going on. To reflect on this experience with pride. To be proud of ourselves. May 15th, 2021 will be a day we never forget. Now let us celebrate our accomplishments with the people we love. We did it!