**14427, Adalberto Gonzalez - graduation**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to our graduation celebration for our students who have completed the University of Arizona, College of Medicine Phoenix, Pathways Scholars Program for this year. We want to thank everyone for being here to help our students celebrate their completion of this unique program that helps students who have the potential to become superb physicians but lack the learning and time management skills needed for medical school. Students approved for this program have experienced unique or greater than average challenges to prepare them to become competitive medical school applicants. In order to be approved for this program students must meet one or more of these criteria. They must be Arizona Residents that are: Socioeconomically disadvantaged, first generation college attendees, be from rural Arizona/Members of Federally recognized American Indian Tribes,

There are nine students in the class year who met the criteria and who have overcome their challenges and stand here today ready to graduate. Some people grow up knowing they will go to college because they know the foundation is there for me them to do this. Some have generations of college behind them and know the expectation and of them many do not wish to repeat the family tradition. But, many of these students don’t know that culture because they come from a culture where a college education is the exception rather than the rule. What they have inside them is a burning desire to become physicians and, beyond that, to use their medical training to treating the under-served and diverse populations of Arizona. Not everyone who earns a medical degree wants to serve the less fortunate. That is very noble and very rare.

Going to college is a challenge indeed, especially for a student who comes from a family where college is not the normal thing to do upon completion of high school. For some families it is a foregone conclusion. But, for these students that was not the case. For them going to college was a dream, one they didn’t know how to make happen. They knew that they had to work harder and longer than some of the more advantaged students to even have the possibility of attending college. This program made the possibility of that dream become a reality.

But, just the existence of this program is not enough. It provides an open door for students to reach for that dream. The most important thing is that these nine students accepted the challenge offered to them and poured their entire heart and soul into it to make tonight happen. You see, if the program was made available and the students accepted it, but when they got here they put forth no effort, they wouldn’t be standing here tonight accepting their Graduate Certificate in “Professional Studies in Health Sciences” be ready to matriculate into the College of Medicine – Phoenix. No, what they had to do was take the opportunity offered them to come and study in this program and set their hearts, minds and efforts to complete the studies so they could meet the required expectations and receive their certificate tonight.

These students have worked hard to learn the necessary elements of Peer Assisted Learning and structured study in the curriculum. They have also worked just as hard to learn the medical school coursework that is used to assess their ability to endure the rigors of the College of Medicine - Phoenix curriculum. The fact that they stand here today means they have met those requirements and will now be able to move upward and onward into the University of Arizona, College of Medicine-Phoenix.

This is not a small accomplishment for any of these students. It was not expected of them growing up. It was not even hoped for in many of their lives. But, because this program was made available, they have accepted the challenge and met the requirements and today they can be proud of their accomplishments. These students come from wildly varied backgrounds. Before they came here to study they had very little in common, other than being a citizen of the state of Arizona. What they do have in common are a desire to become physicians and a desire to serve those less fortunate once they become physicians.

Graduates you can be proud of your accomplishments thus far. You can be proud that you met the requirements to be accepted into the program. You can be proud of what you have accomplished since you came here. No one gifted you with this certificate. You have earned it with your hard work and diligence. Completing this journey was not a breeze. You have had multiple challenges along the way from learning the medical information to learning the structure and study required to get here and what will be required when you enter the medical college to complete your studies.

But, now that you have completed this program of study, you now have proof that you can accomplish anything you set your mind to do. If you study something and decide that is what you want to do with your life, and then commit yourself to meeting or exceeding the requirements of it, then you will be able to do that. You have the talent and the ability to learn it. Now you know that you also have the skills to complete it. You not only have the study skills and organizational skills needed to complete the rigorous studies of medical college but you have the heart that it takes to decide upon a goal or a dream and then to make that dream happen.

There are many students in college who grew up expecting to go to college who do not appreciate the gift they’ve been given. Those students will not come close to meeting their full potential because they haven’t had to overcome much in order to get to college. But, you students came here knowing you had a mountain to climb and you were not only prepared to climb it, you were determined to climb to the top. This has been your Mount Everest and you have succeeded in reaching the top.

From here you will go on to your next challenge, that of medical college. There you will be met with a new set of feats to accomplish, a new set of boundaries and a new set of skills you must learn. You may feel somewhat overwhelmed about that at first. Don’t be. Just breathe and know that you can do it. You have already proven that you can do because of what you have accomplished in order to get there. Remember the study skills you learned in this program. Remember the organizational skills you learned here and put them to use when you get to medical college. You have the skills and tools you need to finish your race and become the doctors that you dream of becoming.

As you go forth today begin to see your next dream as a reality and begin to focus on the steps you need to complete, one at a time, in order to finish that race and become the type of doctor you want to be. Regardless of your chosen field of medicine, you can do it. You can meet and achieve your goals. You have what it takes inside you. You have proven yourself to this school, to your families and to yourself. Now all you have to do is go out there and do what you know is possible.

Congratulations and good luck for a tremendous future in medicine.