**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**ANH NGUYEN**

**REVISED 2**

**"Education, A Bridge for Unity in our society."**

Hello family, friends, faculty, administration, distinguished guests, and fellow students of Cosumnes River College, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak. I am so happy to be here... I've been waiting a long time for this moment! To my fellow graduates, congratulations... we finally made it!! (**If you want to acknowledge anyone in particular that was involved in having you to speak, do that now**). I would like to express my deep gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for asking me to speak.

The theme for this graduating class of 2017 is, "Education, a Bridge For Unity in our Society." **THIS** theme is **MY** theme.... and I can honestly say that I relate to its meaning. ... yes... to each one of us it will have a different impact, but it really sums up my experience and my path to Cosumnes and **beyond**. It was on my mission to gain an education in the United States that I discovered my purpose... what it means to **understand**. I discovered that education really does unify us.

I am sure we agree that this is a great school in so many ways. I have had the privilege to enjoy this special place for several years. In the fall I will move on to transfer to Sacramento State University, but my time here at Cosumnes will always be precious to me. Each day I spent enrolled in this school has been special. I wake up and feel happy and blessed to be able to study new lessons while meeting new friends from all different cultures as we enjoy new experiences. I know that memories made here will last a lifetime. I don't know whether you realize, but in the country from where I came, Vietnam, to be able to study in the United States is something about which we all dream. Some people that I know from my home town have already made the journey, and when it was my turn to follow the path, my opportunity to come here was presented and I eagerly took it. After all, this is something I had wished for a long, long time. .... just one simple example of how education creates a bridge to unity...

Of course, life and plans don't always match our dreams, but if we are true to our goals, we find a way to overcome obstacles on our way to success.... every step on this path has given me a chance to learn and grow... to me, that is success. When I got here, because of my lack of understanding and my poor command of the English language, I had to begin my studies with ESL courses.... English as a Second Language. Looking back, I may have had a hard time at first but I learned the importance of having a solid foundation for understanding. I remember in the Spring, 2014, I registered to take Accounting 301. That's financial accounting with Professor Parilo.... remember when I dreamed of conquering the world... or at least my American college education? Not so fast!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... The truth is that I did really badly, especially on the first test. I felt sad about the results and was desperate to study and succeed, I didn't understand the lecture, so of course I didn't do well on the test. I was frustrated... I wanted to learn but I knew there were problems. I decided to drop out of the class... which is unusual for me. I am not a quitter, but I needed to find more pieces of my education puzzle in order for the lectures to make sense. Dropping out of accounting didn't mean I was giving up.... far from it... I knew I had to improve my English and that became my main focus.

I concentrated on ways in which I might practice and improve my language skills. In the morning when I woke up, I listened to videos on YouTube. Yes... YouTube can be educational! I watched the news regularly and each night before I went to sleep, I read books... all kinds of books. I was determined to discover the mysteries of education that existed beyond my language barrier. I was focused on building a bridge to **understanding**... to unify me to the world around me.

In Spring, 2015, I was ready to try again. I was prepared to listen and learn. I couldn't wait to see how much more I was able to understand. .... so it was back to Accounting 301 with Professor Parilo...**again**...I was so happy... there was so much more that I understood. I was able to follow along with Prof. Parilo's lectures and guess what? I got an A on the first exam and on the second, I received a score of excellent.... I knew I was on my way... and that my determination was strong enough to build bridges.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Parilo. She's a really good teacher... I have found that she encourages me to challenge myself. She makes sure her students grow stronger, and she inspires us to dream and to imagine what we might want to do in our careers. From being around the Professor and her encouragement in the course, and through her interest in the profession, I realized that I, too, would love to become a CPA, a Certified Public Accountant, just like my Professor!

The hunger for education started building the bridge that brought me to United States. That same bridge reached out and supported me to finding my career path. And standing on that bridge to unity I think of my country and just how blessed I am to have been able to discover my path to building my dreams. In Vietnam, so many children have no idea what potential exists for them... they can't dream because they probably don't know what to dream. So many children don't have the opportunity to get higher education.

It is clear to me that education IS the necessary bridge. My desire to learn allowed me to travel. It encouraged me to ask questions, and it insured that in order for me to follow **MY** path, I had to reach out and connect to those around me... as I connect through knowledge gained from my experience here and even with YouTube, each day shows me how strong the power of knowledge is. I think of all of the people back home in Vietnam and I wonder what I can do to encourage them to join this connection... I remember the issues that first blocked my success in Professor Parilo's accounting class and I will find a way to share what I have learned.

We have now completed our time here. Whether you transfer to another university... no matter where you go, I want you to know that from the bottom of my heart I wish all of you... all of US... great success. I'm so fortunate to have found a happy and interesting life here at Cosumnes River College. I have made friends from many different cultures, religions, and geographic locations, but we have all discovered unity through education. Kofi Annan said, "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."

I will continue to do my best to achieve my goals...and it doesn't matter how long it takes... after all, is life about the destination or the journey? No matter how far I go or how long I find my path, I will not stop and I will never forget where I came from. Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I am proud to know the importance of taking those steps to build bridges to understanding and unity.

Thank you!