**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**TANGELA ATKINS**

Hello everyone. To all of you here today: family and friends, faculty and administration, distinguished guests and colleagues, and most of all, to all of my cohorts, It is a privilege to have this opportunity to speak to you on this occasion as we mark the completion of our studies here at West Coast University. We've made it to the “finish line” of sorts… because, as we all know, life and achievements occur in cyclical patterns… just as we celebrate one milestone, we also welcome the beginning of the next challenges and opportunities we are poised to face. Today marks the completion of our formal studies… we gladly and enthusiastically accept our pins as we commemorate our time here, and tomorrow new challenges await.

For the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, we have traveled this path together. We’ve supported one another through the stresses and strains of our coursework. We’ve taken turns as we commiserated and alternated between being the voice of the resolute and the one needing to be calmed. We struggled to preserve any shred of a sense of humor we might have had as we tried to remember that “**stressed**” spelled backwards is really just “**desserts.**” (**Wait for the laugh**) We also knew that no amount of rationalizing our collective overwhelm seemed powerful enough to get us through the arduous training and mental testing we had to endure to get to this point. **(If you want, mention two or three legendary rough spots…. Tests, clinics, projects, that seemed impossible at the time**) Who among us will ever forget \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or when we had to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? …and who among us **STILL** wakes up from a fitful half sleep screaming “**POTASSIUM**!” “**CATHETER**!!” (**Or use another typical term found in every test you've had to take and wait for the laugh**). Today we can finally take a deep breath as we accept our well-deserved pins, and we begin with a “**clean slate**” …. A **blank page** if you will…. Some of you may recognize this as you've seen it before… thanks to the heavy workload we just endured, these new blank pages look eerily familiar…. You know… like the social calendars we couldn't maintain while we were completing our coursework (**Wait for the laugh**).

Florence Nightingale said, “I attribute my success to this: I never gave or took any excuse.” Nursing school has provided all of us with a long, thorough, and arduous journey… one that seemed insurmountable at times, but as each one of us faced the trials and tests, we learned that we were stronger than our considerations, more determined than our doubts, and more prepared than our hesitations. It takes limitless passion and commitment to be a nurse and we all stepped up to the plate and showed what we’re made of. Our courses trained us and strengthened us to face the ultimate challenges that will be presented as we take our places in our field, and we will never forget that we have what it takes to support others and save lives. Ralph Waldo Emerson reminds us, “To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.” As the world and times evolve, nursing professionals will be called on more and more to support others to find health, well being, and healing… to “breathe easier,” to provide any reassurance possible that somehow, some way, things will work out. Although we’ve traveled an often difficult and unsettling path through school, we learned well…we will be the voices of stability and reason…. The backbones of comfort and reassurance…. The sources of compassion and positive reinforcement…. And we will find the way, in each situation, to demonstrate that we have the passion and essential skills required to make a difference.

“The **meaning** of life is to find your gift. The **purpose** of life is to give it away.” Although the source of this quote has been debated, its power and truth are no less authentic. Each one of us determined to join the nursing profession because we knew where our gifts lie. Now it's up to each one of us to fulfill our purpose. We've received a thorough foundation here at West Coast University and it's time to take that knowledge and continue to grow as we make our mark on our profession. I want to thank the faculty and staff for all of the support we have received and I want to congratulate and thank my cohorts for sharing this unforgettable journey. (**If you want you can add**). To paraphrase music legend Lou Reed…. “Stick a **pin** in us…. We’re **DONE**!” (**Note: His actual lyric was, “Stick a fork in me, I'm done!”**) Thank you all!