**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JOHN BRITTON**

Hello everyone!It’s great to be here to celebrate this year’s graduating class from Vance Granville Community College School of Radiography. I’d like to thank (**If Mrs. Thomas invited you, please acknowledge her**) Mrs. Angela Thomas, Dean of Health Sciences, for inviting me to be here to speak with all of you. I would like to acknowledge all of the parents, friends, and family of this year’s graduates as well as the future grads of the class of 2019. Everyone present has played an important part in the achievements we recognize today... for family, friends, and teachers, your support and the knowledge and patience you’ve shared were great motivators and allowed these grads to build strong foundations of confidence, knowledge, and experience. To the future graduates, you provide a glimpse into the future. You presence reminds the class of 2018 that they are being watched and in so doing they also teach important lessons of focus, determination, and completion.

Being here at today’s commencement and pinning exercises gave me a great chance to think.... after all, it wasn’t that long ago that I was eagerly awaiting receipt of **MY** pin at my commencement. That was a day filled with lots of congratulations and cheers. As I look back, a question comes to mind that I now pose to all of you graduates: If someone asked to be **YOUR** apprentice, what would you teach them? .... and I want to add something here.... and it’s for the rest of our guests to think about.... while the graduates may choose to focus on techniques or important data and criteria they may have learned during the course of this program, it’s not my intention for everyone else to feel left out!!! In life, we all, at some time, take on the roll of apprentice or mentor/teacher.... every single person in this room is in a position to teach as well as to learn. For parents and friends, you’ve provided support with practical life lessons that strengthened and encouraged other important qualities, so I ask **YOU** as well, if someone asked to be **YOUR** apprentice (as well), what would **YOU** teach them?? By the way, your respective assignments can be completed and discussed when you leave here and go on to whatever activities you have planned next!!! Yes... that’s right!!! We are all students... and teachers.... in every phase of life. The learning doesn’t end when you leave Vance Granville Community College... either as a student, graduate, or guest!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

If there’s one thing I learned throughout my time at this school, it would be, “**AIM HIGH... NEVER FORGET YOUR ROOTS**.” It’s so important to set goals for yourself, both personally and professionally. It’s what keeps us going.... advancing... moving forward.... and of course, always learning. A lot has been said about setting goals and aiming high.... the biologist and author E.O. Wilson reminds us, “You are capable of more than you know. Choose a goal that seems right for you and strive to be the best, however hard the path. Aim high. Behave honorably. Prepare to be alone at times, and to endure failure. Persist! The world needs all you can give.” Then again, there was a comedian who said, “Aim high and you won’t shoot your foot off...” **THAT** wisdom always comes in handy!! (**Wait for the laugh**). To aim high is to work towards significant rewards along with personal and professional satisfaction. Many successful people set their sights in order to reach for new heights. Although sometimes they miss their mark, they **NEVER** lose because they gain valuable experience and lifelong lessons. Small goals may feel more comfortable, realistic and achievable, and it’s good to practice stretching in steps, but as we learn and grow, it doesn’t serve us to continue to pursue small goals. Think bigger. Stretch further. Imagine going beyond your limits. That’s where you’ll find inspiration. Remember these words, “The aim of an argument, or a discussion, or of resolving a problem or project, should not be victory but **progress**...” and in gaining progress you’ll find that you’ve won anyway! The great painter and inventor, Michelangelo also tells, “ The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.” No matter how we state it, the point is simple.... look beyond, push yourselves, focus.... that’s where motivation and inspiration are to be found.

It’s also really important to remember who you are, where you’re from, where you’re roots are, and realize that honoring your foundation will insure that you live a grounded, meaningful life.... one with purpose. Each one of you has a legacy that you’ve inherited.... it’s **YOUR** background, and that’s been built on your experiences and relationships with your town, your family, your friends, and your community. That gift of

heritage comes with a responsibility and a certain price.... and that is to share it.... inspire... spread the word, teach others as you have been taught. Learn right from wrong and support others in maintaining their curiosity and focus on all the things that count in life, because **THAT** is the reward for a life well-lived.

I can talk about this now because although, relatively speaking, I am **just beginning** my adult journey.... yes.... even though I worked at other jobs before I graduated in 2015 with my Associates Degree in Applied Sciences. I then went on to complete my studies in Radiation Technology and realized that the more I live, the more I work, the more I am blessed to serve our radiology team at the Durham VA Hospital, the more I believe there is **SO MUCH MORE** to learn, yet with age and experience, I gain new insights. I guess you can say that I am in a kind of “sweet spot...” young enough to recall what it’s like to attend school yet old enough to see the value of working and striving in the professional world.

I asked some people closest to me how they would describe me.... after all, I practice what I preach and I honor my roots!! I got responses from my wife and some of my peers, and while they may have **THOUGHT** they should be kind, here’s what they said, ....” Extremely sharp....” (hmmm) ...”Sarcastic...” (**Who? ME????**) (**Wait for the laugh**)... “Thoughtful,”.... “Obnoxiously **POSITIVE**.” **I’LL TAKE THAT ONE**!!! Every day I think of my situation, who I am, my responsibilities, and what I may envision for my future. Every day I get up and go to work and do my best to maintain and improve the quality of life for everyone around me. If I were to describe the person you see standing here before you, I would say that I am a simple married father of four teenagers. I’m from Durham and I am proud to say that I have never met a stranger that I couldn’t relate to.... and I have met **PLENTY** of strangers! (**Wait for the laugh**). After I graduated from high school, I got married, helped to raise my kids, and worked many odd jobs before I eventually chose to pursue a career in Radiology. While the early years might have had their challenges, as I said earlier, every experience taught me to stretch my thoughts and outlook and to continue to grow in ways I hadn’t imagined before. After I got my Associates Degree, I went on to pursue Radiography. That curriculum provided much needed **exposure**.... pardon the pun (**Wait for the laugh**) to the many varied aspects of life as a radiologist, and from completing rotations in multiple clinics, area hospitals, and urgent care offices, each unique assignment was an opportunity, and while I am fortunate to monitor and guide students several days each week, I want you to know that **I** learn from **YOU** as well. Your questions and your reactions keep me on my toes and allow me to realize the importance of having **PATIENCE** as well as having **PATIENTS**!! ... and while I have to confess that I was a little “concerned” to get up and speak today, I realize this is all part of growing and being the best, most well rounded, father, husband, professional and friend that I can be.... and who knows? As I pursue additional certification within VIR, maybe **ALL OF THOSE** not too subtle hints might encourage and inspire me to go into teaching.... that would **CERTAINLY** fit into a category of me stretching my goals and **AIMING HIGH**!

... and here we are at this pinning ceremony and I am sure you know that while there are great coincidences in life, there are **NO** accidents. To me this pin represents several ideals.... the metal represents durability, strength, longevity. The inscription reminds you of your education, from where you’ve come, what you’ve learned, and the foundation you’ve built. And the pin itself??? Of course that reminds you to stay **SHARP**. Remain **FOCUSED**. Know your lessons and use your knowledge. Every day, new strides and discoveries are made in the name of progress in the ever expanding field of Radiography. While some of the uninitiated might just see an image, we support the medical community in using greater efficiency, expanded insights, and more accurate imaging in order to enhance the quality of life for all.... and especially for those people that have given us life, shown us the way, and have walked with us through our adventures.

I want to wish hearty and sincere congratulations to this graduating class, and I look forward to continue learning with **ALL OF YOU**!!! Thank you!!!