**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**GREG EDINGER**

Hello everyone and welcome to the commencement exercises for Vanguard Sentinel Career and Technology centers for 2022!!! To parents, friends, distinguished guests, school staff, board members, and administrators, today’s event signifies the culmination of our work together… laying priceless educational and career **foundations**. To our graduates, let’s just say, you’ve been “**found**!!” By that I mean, you’re leaving here today with the necessary tools required to build on the lessons you learned here. With insights and knowledge into how things work and “how to get it done, along with the support and encouragement you have from your connections to everyone in this room and beyond, each one of you has what it takes to go out into the professional world and make your mark. To paraphrase the newscaster, Tom Brokaw, has said, “You are educated….. the proof is in your certification. You may think of that as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world.”

Graduates, some of you have been here a relatively short time…. Perhaps just one year, while others have experienced our program’s offerings for four years. No matter the length of your time here, I think it’s accurate to state that you’re a different person than who you were when you joined us. We’ve all evolved and transformed in so many different ways. The most fascinating thing about life is that it is “kinetic,” meaning it’s always moving, always morphing, always changing, and through that process, we also constantly change. We’ve all lived through an extraordinary few years and while every generation has its defining moments, graduates, the world we have experienced in your time here has proven to be, for lack of a better word, “extraordinary.” Through global crises, uncertainty, and all kinds of stops and starts, you showed what you’re made of. Even while situations may have gotten stranger and more challenging…. Even while each one of us, in our own ways, found new depth to the meaning of…. **FRUSTRATION**… (**Wait for the laugh**), you focused on the positive… you kept your eye on the prize, namely being here today, you realized and respected the importance of preparing for the next steps in life, and you prioritized your well being, your determination, your intentions, and, most importantly, **your future**. I am sure everyone in this room will agree that accomplishment is worthy of high praise, and we applaud you (**Do you want to lead a short round of applause here?)**

Here, at Vanguard, we are proud to offer a varied and diverse program, one that educates and trains the next generation of professionals so they may build, manage, and support the infrastructures of industries and sectors that are critical in keeping those molecules of life and work moving….. literally. Whether you’ve chosen to apply your talents in medical, technical, commercial, or industrial sectors, we are so proud of your efforts and determination and we look forward to encouraging you as you make your mark in the world.

I think it’s safe to say that experiencing a years long global pandemic was not on **ANYONE’S** bucket list… **I PROMISE YOU**… it **WASN’T** on **MINE**!! (**Wait for the laugh**), but as we look back on what life has been like for the past few years, no matter what your theories or beliefs may be, **one truth prevails**. Experience…. no matter what kind… is our greatest teacher. We are learning to “expect the unexpected,” and in the process, we really begin to understand and respect the value of being prepared, informed, and educated.

We’ve also been seeing that, as the professional world evolves through time, employment trends have been shifting. While many sectors are encouraging a greater volume of remote work, other employers are realizing how crucial it is to provide additional and more varied kinds of support for those that work for them. We are beginning to see that compensation isn’t just about that “dollar per hour” figure. In a more “mutually respected” work atmosphere, humanity and regard begin to take over front and center. Improved working conditions are as valuable as actual salary, and many employers are beginning to understand the importance of work/life balance with benefits that may include enhanced sick leave, adjusted hours of employment, and are providing greater community based support. The point is, the more open-minded we are as employees, the more employers will be encouraged to create new and more mutually supportive business models and work environments.

As you find your places in the professional world, no matter where you go, think about how your presence will make a difference. Think about your essential part in the teams you join. Think about keeping your eyes and ears open, learning from those around you with greater life and work experience, and how you can be an extension of their knowledge and expertise. I have always been a believer in respecting the foundations of the past, giving the professionals a chance to guide, and when the time is right, adding your fresh point of view. In the new professional climate out there, in the “real world,” companies may be operating on a “leaner, meaner” principle, meaning there may be less people to get the job done…. which also means, the more you know… the more interest you demonstrate… the more you are willing to expand your knowledge and enhance your skill sets in your chosen field, the more valuable you will be as an employee.

Technically, you’re all graduating today. We congratulate you for that. It really is a remarkable accomplishment, **especially** in this day and age…. But never forget…. This is not the end…. This is the **BEGINNING** of your education!!! You are **REALLY** going to start learning once you find your jobs and begin the real work, and that’s the **GOOD NEWS**!! It’s believed that Dr. Seuss once said, “Sometimes we will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.” Graduates, by tomorrow, your time here at Vanguard will be a memory. It is the intention of all of us affiliated with the school, that with each day that brings distance to your technical career training, the value of your time here will increase and will become more precious and more relied upon…. (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**)… and if it’s not, let us know and we can make some changes in the curriculum so the next wave of students and graduates **REALLY** get the message!! (**And wait for the laugh**). All jokes aside, please know the most important thing…. It’s been a privilege to work with you…. To teach you… to prepare you for the professional world… and to imagine how each one of you, in your own special, unique way, will shape the future. This world was, is, and always has been, an incredible work in process. It’s now time for you to join in and share your skills, curiosity, and passion to continue to shape and grow our local and global communities. On behalf of all of the staff, board members, and administrators at Vanguard, we wish each one of you sincere congratulations and the very best of luck and good fortune in your professions and in life. Thank you all!!