



News release

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Gateway speakers: Surround yourself with great people, believe in yourself

Zaida Hernandez-Irisson, Gateway Technical College 2014-15 Spring and Summer Commencement class student responder and “voice of the students” told fellow graduates Tuesday night they need to believe in themselves – because great things can happen when they do.

She ought to know – five years ago, she had no idea she would be delivering this address. It was then she completed Gateway’s English Language Learner program, with the only thought in mind to gain the skills to further her education – but never thinking it would lead to speaking in front of a couple thousand gathered for the event.

“At first, I didn’t believe in myself. But there were those at Gateway who believed in me – and look what I am doing now,” she says. “I am graduating with an engineering degree and I am here today. Five years ago, I didn’t know English – and now I am speaking at commencement.

“There were those along the way who saw in me what I didn’t. They pushed me, they helped me to advance. Believe in yourself, as others do.”

Hernandez-Irisson knew early on in her life she wanted to become an engineer, and she had a plan to achieve it. After completing her ELL program,

she earned a Barbering diploma through Gateway, which gave her the skills to become a manager of a barber shop. Gaining that job helped her to gain the resources to pay for her Electrical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering program courses.

“I always knew I wanted to be an engineer, but I knew I had to increase my English skills, and help to pay for the degree,” she says. “I knew the steps I had to take to get there.”

Dominic A. Cariello, director of manufacturing and operations for the Flow Instrumentation Group of Badger Meter Inc., and commencement keynote speaker, told other graduates the steps they need to take to be successful in life.

“Don’t ever stop learning,” said Cariello. “Use your studies and the tools you’ve gained to shape your future.”

Cariello said one of the greatest things he has done in life was to surround himself with greater people. “As you go forward, be one of those greater people,” he encouraged students.

The Spring 2015 graduating class size is about 600 students. About 280 graduates attended the ceremony.

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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