Opening Remarks:

Inside the Statue of Liberty, located in its lower level, there is a small plaque. Engraved on this plaque is one of my favorite poems and it is appropriate for tonight’s graduation because it really does symbolize the Mission of Clover Park Technical College. The poem was written by Emma Lazarus (1883) and is entitled, "The New Colossus." Perhaps the title sounds unfamiliar, but you might recognize some of the words. Let me recite a few:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." The poem goes on to say [I’m paraphrasing] to make all of them feel welcome, let’s lift our…"lamp(s) beside our golden door."

Unlike in this poem, there aren’t any golden doors at Clover Park Technical College. But in our 73-year history, our doors have always and forever remained open “to welcome those” who want to transform their lives - as in the case of Dwayne Waller. He is seated in the front row (please stand). Here’s his story:
Dwayne Waller:

After working at the same company for years, Dwayne was unexpectedly unemployed, depleted his savings, became homeless, and was forced to sleep in abandoned cars. Because of our College Mission, he is on the “Road to Success.” He now has real job skills and will be graduating with a high-demand degree in the computer field. Because of his story, our Board of Trustees selected him as our 2015 Transforming Lives Nominee. Dwayne, you can be seated and thank you for allowing me to share your story of success.

But with 1,285 completers in the Class of 2015, I know Dwayne is not the only student success story. With 65% of Clover Park students requiring some type of financial aid, many of you struggled to pay for school. Others had to overcome the challenge of being the 1st in your family to ever attend college, or had day care issues, or needed developmental education classes. But those challenges didn’t stop you, because:

- 445 of you have an ‘unbelievable’ GPA of 3.75 or higher.
- 521 will graduate with a high-demand certificate making you ‘employment’ ready.
- 27% will earn an associate degree.
- 108 of you are veterans, perhaps, returning from the ‘field of battle.’ Thank you for your service.

Graduating Class of 2015, you’re really unique, ranging in age from 17 to 65 years old (retirement). This demonstrates that it’s never too early – or – too late to get an education. Clover Park Technical College has the Northwest Career & Technical High School, and I want to highlight one of its graduates. Damon Epley is seated in the front row (please stand):

Damon Epley:

Amazingly, tonight he’ll be graduating with both a high school diploma and associate degree in Computer Network & Information Security Systems. On top of that, he has a 3.2 GPA. What a great start in life. Damon your story is remarkable; thank you (you may be seated).

My last point, remember, as I mentioned in the poem, our College Mission welcomes you - but it also prepares you. Yes, it prepares you for The Jobs of the 21st Century. I guess we’ll have a little roll-call, programs such as:

- Surgical Technology.
- Cosmetology.
- Health Unit Coordinator.
- Hemodialysis.
- Medical Assistant.

As a result, you’re not only more apt to become productive members of society - but you’re [now] pre-positioned to live out ‘the best of the American Dream.’ For that reason, Class of 2015, we celebrate your success. Congratulations; I am so Proud of You.

Next, we’ll hear from Mary Moss, the Chair of our Board of Trustees.