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Being the first of my family to actively seek a formal education, I want to say thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of something that means so much to me.

When I was in high school and being from a very small family a kind of weight was created due to education. I had to do well. The future well being of my family depended on it. I am all they have. I struggled from everything from social anxiety to insomnia while in school and my academics paid for it and knowing that larger universities are only going to see me as a statistic and not as an investment, I was scared. If it was not for the accessibility of NCC, I would have gone into the workforce much like the rest of my family. Knowing that NCC was there for me and knowing that being able to still push forward to pursue a better education was still an option even though my high school record wasn't flawless, gave me hope. I speak to you now as a soon to be NCC graduate coming this May, and I would not be the same person as I am today without this institution.

As a person who is going to pursue the field of secondary education, I love to aviate its importance. Growing up in Connecticut the concept of getting a higher education is introduced to us from a young age especially since the standard of living is one of the more expensive places within the US. Along with that is the misconception that a community college is inferior to big private universities when that couldn't be more wrong. The fact that a community college is those stepping stones for an overwhelming variety of people. While working in the counseling center I have had the pleasure of speaking with a wide variety of students, all with wonderful stories to tell. New students that were in the same boat as me and felt that their high school career wasn't good enough so came to NCC or students that wanted to experience the college life before having to commit fully with something like dorming or even larger student loans. There are students that have the opportunity to come back from years of being away from education to experience new things and have new experiences. Transfer students that want to take advantage of a more affordable way to receive credits and complete a degree just that much faster. In reality community college students are more understanding of the system, more financially versed, and have already been introduced to this higher level of education in a more comforting setting.

Community College is a family of individuals that come to learn, socialize and enjoy being around like minded peers that come with a goal they are set out to achieve. Community College is an opportunity for everyone and that kind of accessibility is a gift that anyone can receive at any time they feel is ready.