

## Speech

Good evening Legislators, College Representatives and fellow students. My name is Kevin Champagne and I am currently a student at Quinebaug Valley Community College. Like many community college students, my path to higher education is a unique one and today I would like to tell you all about my experience as a non-traditional college student. Prior to my enrollment at QVCC, I was hesitant on going back to school. I was recently homeless and concerned if I would be accepted by students and staff, if the professors would respect me or just laugh at me for coming to college at such an old age. And if I would be able to comprehend the modern way of teaching. After all it was 36 years since I last sat in a classroom.

All my worries were put to ease after my first few classes at QVCC. My professors showed they cared about me and my growth as a student. I was not shy to put in the effort and even when I doubted myself, I would often hear, “Kevin, there is no dumb question.”

The support at QVCC is **INCREDIBLE**. I receive guidance from staff that I respect and knowledge from professors who never talk down to me, always encourage me, and talk with me in a mature and mannerly way. This level of respect is new to me.

The confidence QVCC has in me breeds confidence within myself. My confidence was lacking before attending college. I lived in fear for years. Fear kept me from applying to college when I was young and led me to an unsafe lifestyle that I am now proud to say is in my past. From hearing **positive** statements I’ve produced **positive** results. Not once at QVCC has any faculty or staff member given me any negative feedback. They are forthright, constructive, and optimistic in my academics and never make me feel less than. Every person I encounter in college, encourages me that I can do **anything** and when I struggle, they assure me, I can handle **anything** and succeed.

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When I first enrolled at QVCC my vision was to take a few classes on local history to fill up my day with something to do. Today, my goal is to earn a PhD in Human Services so that I eventually can give others the same opportunities I have been given. To say my goals and self-worth have changed is an understatement.

If you would have told me 36 years ago that I would have a 3.86 GPA, that I would be the PHI THETA KAPPA Vice President of fellowship and service, a member at large for the student government association, a student ambassador, volunteering and organizing the schools feed the food insecurity program, and also volunteering for speaking commitments to students earning a GED and encouraging them to enroll in college, I would never had believe you!

My story is a testament on how valuable of a resource this college is to me and any past, present, or future QVCC student. Your approval of the requested funding today will insure many stories of personal achievements. It will continue the chance for other to succeed and in my opinion, help stamp out poverty and inequalities. I would like to thank you all for listening today but most importantly I would like to thank QVCC for the life it has provided me.

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