Las Positas College
Commencement 2012

Dr. Kevin G. Walthers, President of Las Positas College

Good evening. As we prepare to continue our program, it is my honor to take this opportunity to offer a few words to our graduates and their honored guests. Tonight’s events are not the end of a journey – commencement is a point of departure for the next phase of your life. Many of you are ready to continue to a four year school, confident in your ability to be successful. Others are ready to enter the workforce with the skills to take on challenging yet rewarding careers.

To our friends and family in the audience, you are looking at a cohort of individuals who are the future of our community. Compared to their peers with only a high school diploma, the graduates sitting before you tonight are more likely to vote, will see their lifetime earnings more than double, will require fewer social services and will engage in civic activity at a higher rate. They are less likely to be unemployed, more likely to have stable family lives and will have the opportunity to enjoy a higher standard of living. Anyone who doubts the future of our community, our state or our nation need only to look at this event to be reassured that the future of California is bright.

The graduates tonight have earned their diplomas and credentials. Allow me to explain to you what this means – this does not mean that you have jumped through a prescribed number of hoops or checked off enough boxes to obtain your diploma. When you receive your diploma you will notice that it tells you that the faculty of Las Positas College have observed your work, measured your talent and deemed you worthy of a degree or certificate. Our goal is not to have you memorize a certain number of facts or complete a defined amount of equations. Our goal is to give you the tools to continue to learn and grow throughout your lives. Tonight your professors, instructors and teachers are proudly affirming that you possess the inherent qualities of an educated person, worthy of a degree or credential.

Tonight’s event is a celebration of accomplishment, but it is also a time for gratitude. Singer/songwriter Ray Wylie Hubbard recently wrote that his “really good days” are the days in which his “gratitude exceeds his expectations.” Graduates, tonight I know that you are grateful for those that helped you along the way – family, friends, faculty, staff and the countless community members that support this institution through their tax dollars and contributions.

I am grateful that our students are as prepared for the future as any student, anywhere. Our students are accepted to UC, CSU and other prestigious programs across the nation. For example, the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley admits only one hundred transfer students each year – we have with us tonight four of the students who will be part of that transfer class in the fall.

Others in our class have completed their course of study and will step into careers as welders, medical professionals, automotive technicians or public safety officers. Your associate degree or certificate is a credential that will remain with you as you embark on a career that is not only challenging and rewarding, it also pays a wage that can support a family in the California economy. Last month I heard
from welding instructor Scott Miner, on the occasion of his mother’s transport to the hospital. He shared his gratitude of the great service provided to her by a nurse that had received her degree from the Chabot Las Positas Community College District.

You represent tonight the greatness of the State of California, its Community College System and Las Positas College. You have been served by an unwavering faculty and staff that are committed to student success at all levels. I am honored that our student body is grateful for the education they receive here. This week I heard from student Derek Laki as he expressed his gratitude for many on campus, faculty and staff alike. It was clear that Derek’s gratitude came from the fact that he received support from all corners of campus. Derek – I am grateful for your thoughtfulness in recognizing those who helped you along the way.

I know our students join Derek in expressing thanks to faculty members that go above and beyond every day by sponsoring clubs, directing arts events, and organizing community events that demonstrate our commitment to honoring a diverse community. Our faculty are known for offering additional tutoring help, serving on the myriad of committees in our participatory governance structure and taking their own time and resources to support student events. We are grateful for our faculty members who, on their own time, provided personal tours of our programs to a delegation of educators from China. I know Trustee Gin remembers that day well – and the view he took in from the top of the eighty foot boom platform.

I know our students share my gratitude for the support along the way from the tireless effort of staff committed to putting Students First. Some of you have relayed stories to me about the dedication of the staff members who ensured your pathways were clear – staff members in in our admissions and records department, the library, financial aid or the tutoring center. I am sure you are grateful for the work of the IT staff that ensure your classrooms are ready, the public safety officers who ensure a safe environment and the maintenance staff that take on the daunting task of keeping the campus clean and beautiful.

Graduates, I have seen your gratitude displayed as you had the chance to hone your personal vision with counselors, learned to conduct original research from a dedicated staff of librarians and improved your skills in the writing, math and computer labs. You have taught each other through the campus tutoring center and, and your student leaders have invested in the resources that make the student experience unique. I am continually honored by the gratitude expressed by our student veterans, who have found a place of peace in our veteran program following what would be, for the rest of us, an unimaginable experience in service of our nation.

As a campus community, we feel great pride in your success. Over the course of the year we have heard great stories about the individual achievements within our student body. Kyle Suchland competed with the LPC swim team and Jourdin Hermann ran on the college’s best-ever cross country team. They competed at the highest level while earning perfect 4.0 GPA this year, earning recognition as the male and female scholar athletes of the year. Robin Rivera came to LPC after a tumultuous time in her life and found that education would provide an opportunity for her and her daughter. In the fall she will
enter the University of California at Berkeley to continue work toward her four year degree. Danish Habib’s family immigrated to our community from Afghanistan when she was 14 years old. She knew no English and had no way to know what was in store for her. Tonight she sits among our graduates as the first female member of her family to graduate from college.

Each of you likely has a story to tell about the challenges you faced in reaching this point. You await your reward tonight, confident in your success. We applaud your accomplishments and encourage you to be grateful for the investment made in you by family, friends, faculty, staff and your community. We are grateful for all that you have done. I started today with high expectations for this event, this college and this graduating class. As I look out today and see the students, faculty, staff and families that made this possible, I am grateful to be a part of this community. I think you all agree that today is a really good day.