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EDUCATION PROFILE

From Continuing Ed Student to College Graduate

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

These past two years have been the most challenging of my professional life. The weight of protecting the health and safety of the Kingsborough while we continued to fulfill our mission has been an incredible one. Fortunately, it is not one I carry alone; I am fortunate to do this work on behalf and with a stellar community of faculty and staff. And we do it proudly, willingly and excitedly because of the dynamic students that call Kingsborough their academic home. This month, it is my pleasure to turn the reigns of this month's column to one such student, Anthony H. Thomas.

The first time I stepped through the Kingsborough gates I did so in 2009 as a Continuing Education student. I completed both a Paralegal Certificate and a certificate in Public Speaking. My time in Continuing Ed was so positive that when I decided I wanted to obtain my degree, I could only think of one place: KCC. My new journey began

in the Spring of 2020. The news reported a nation under siege; Covid-19 had spread throughout the United States and worldwide. The pandemic and social-distance guidelines forced us into a virtual world, restricting human connection. As many stayed home, they became aware of another pandemic brewing for years – the killing of many African Americans in America. In protest, African Americans hit the streets in the thousands, calling for change and an equitable criminal justice system. As a believer in creating a better world for all humanity, the question to myself was, “how can I help to heal the world and make it a better place?” At that time, I thought becoming a law enforcement officer would help, and have better policing in communities that felt attacked. I applied to Kingsborough Community College (KCC), and I was accepted; then came the KCC Welcome Wagon with the college president herself. Immediately, I felt at home as I asked, “How many college presidents take the time to welcome students in this fashion?” President Schrader



Kingsborough Community College President Dr. Claudia V. Schrader chats with KCC Student Anthony H. Thomas at the end of finals week at the College.

encouraged me and told me that I could do it. Many times I felt like I wanted to quit, but I would hear her voice in my head saying I could do it, and I pressed on. I did so with a major in criminal justice.

My first semester was scary, but I gave it my all. I was very pleased and super impressed that I was able to accomplish straight A grades, ending that semester on a high with a 3.9 GPA. At the end of Fall 2020 semester, I was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa honor society and later became

Vice President of Service. During my time at KCC, I also ran a successful campaign to become chief of staff for the Student Government Association, served as a delegate in The University Students Senate for City University of New York (CUNY), became an America Needs You fellow, was on the Dean's list all three semesters and, most recently, was inducted to the National Society For Leadership and Success.

As the world transitioned from the COVID-19 pause, I returned to work. Due to a shortage of workers returning, I was tasked with more than 40 hours per week. It has been rough; many mornings, I have had to be at work by 4:30 a.m. and left at 11:30 p.m., catching little sleep between days. My phone was not just a phone; it became my workbook and modem as I used it for a hotspot to access lectures and submit assignments. The job, class courses, and school committees were demanding, but I made it work. I had to jump on Zoom calls for committees and society meetings during work hours. Looking back, I could hardly find time to catch

my breath, but my faith, family, friends, and most of all, my dog, Vogue, helped me navigate through the storms and remain sane.

Now that I have completed my associate degree, with honors, I was accepted to five colleges in New York City, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Baruch College, Hunter College, Brooklyn College, and City College. At KCC, I connected with many students from diverse backgrounds. I have managed to establish friendships that will last a lifetime. College was a big transition for me, but in a few months (and less than 2 years) I will earn my college degree. I am grateful for this experience and for new philosophical approach to life and this world that I gained at KCC.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 72-acre academic oasis located in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. Kingsborough Community College is committed to enhancing learning opportunities for the Brooklyn community.

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