

Commencement Remarks, Alice Dietz, June 14, 2024

First and foremost, Congratulations. This is an exciting time for the graduating class of 2024 and probably what will be looked upon as a nostalgic time for all the friends and family who have surrounded you in your journeys to get to where you are today. I am humbled and honored to be your speaker tonight—and lucky for you, there is nothing I dislike more than a long speech, especially in the way of one of the most important life accomplishments.

I am a proud transfer student of Lower Columbia College. Did I drop out? Yes. But I still had a number of transferable credits. And I am also a first-generation 4-year college graduate.

Whether your road to LCC was through athletics, a specific program, or remaining close to home, your choice will benefit you throughout your life. As a governing board member, I have witnessed firsthand the passion, dedication, and just straight-up love the Faculty, Staff, Coaches, and community have for fostering student success. Tonight is about YOU and LCC is about YOU.

When I was asked to be tonight's commencement speaker, I felt immediately nervous and wildly unqualified. I'm a Trustee and I'm about to have to come clean to President Seimears and Vice President Sprague that I was a terrible student during my time at LCC and they probably don't want someone like to me represent the college.

- My first quarter at LCC, I was put on academic probation (I'm sorry mom and dad if you're just now hearing about this)
- I skipped classes (so so many classes)
- I was the definition of a procrastinator, and probably haven't shaken that entirely
- And at 19, I became pregnant with my oldest son Deacon and ultimately ended up dropping out of LCC. *On a side note - Our sons are my absolute pride and joy and they are both here today – but specifically Deacon who just finished his first year of college as a full time student-athlete, which makes me proud beyond measure. Doc, you're next buddy boy.*

So as I approached the follow-up meeting with Matt and Kendra, ready to decline and offer a million other, way more qualified, inspirational speakers, I started with asking them, "why me?" I came clean with my history at LCC and my struggles academically. So I was surprised by their answer of, "Why Not You?" And it made me think of how I am where I am today and realizing that I have spent a portion of my time, without ever realizing it, asking myself, "Why Not Me?" Upon reflection I realized I have put myself out there. I did some brave and big things along the way. So, why did I lead the request for this speaking opportunity about what embarrassed me about myself as a student rather than with some of my accomplishments? Because after my first almost failed quarter at LCC

- I was terrified to fail again and it helped me become more diligent as a student. A more involved student. A more understanding student – I reflect on this often when I hear about LCC's accumulative student-athlete GPA and think to myself "dang, girl, you were dragging everyone down"
- I was a successful forward and captain of the women's soccer team @ LCC. Being in a team environment also taught me the importance of working together, seeing other's strengths, and combining talents for a greater mission. Seeing the impacts and value of collaboration is a lesson I utilize in my current career daily.

- I became comfortable in leadership roles in extra-curricular activities. When I hear about the events and inclusivity the Associated Students of LCC accomplish, it makes me excited for what that type of leadership can and will look like in our community.
- At LCC, I took an integrated studies course and fell in love with academics, I discovered my “gift for gab” was just that, A Gift, that continues to take me far in life and career. (it also gets me in trouble sometimes)
- I juggled full-time student-athletics while working full-time as a manager of a local coffee shop. At 18 years old, my boss at the time made me fire a grown adult and I cried.
- I had a child at a young age and I immediately re-enrolled in school, walked onto the Evergreen State College women’s soccer team, and worked my way into an athletic scholarship. Evergreen was my dream college because of how much I loved LCC’s integrated studies courses.
- I took 20 credits as a full-time student-athlete and mother and graduated with my BA on time. My husband Doug and I even yolo’d a temporary stay in Germany while he played basketball and we were potty training our toddler.
- I purchased and opened a restaurant at the age of 22 (which honestly was sort of traumatizing but I learned a lot)

Was my path straight forward or perfect? No. Did I run into some hurdles along the way. Yes. But really? Big Whoop – let your successes define you, not your failures. So I’m here now, speaking to all of you amazing, accomplished, diverse, and unique individuals because I said no to the negative thoughts and said, “Yes, Alice, Why Not You?”

So my message to you graduates, friends and families in the crowd, not just in academics but in all areas of your lives, keep asking yourselves, Why Not You?

Why Not You, It requires some bravery. It requires boldness. It requires you to face your fears. But the pay off is worth it, even with a few big whoop failures along the way. Congratulations to the class of 2024!