

NYC College of Technology Commencement
Prepared Remarks
State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli
June 1, 2009

President Hotzler, trustees, faculty and staff, distinguished guests and graduates: It is my privilege to be here as we recognize the achievements of the New York City College of Technology's 2009 graduates.

To the graduates here today: this is your day. Enjoy every moment of it and share it with those closest to you. I offer you my congratulations.

This school is a national model for technological education and part of the extraordinary City University of New York system.

You are now a part of a rich heritage that includes three female college presidents, including City Tech's former President Ursula Schwerin, New York State Senator Eric Adams, numerous top chefs, and the late Hiroaki (Rocky) Aoki, founder of the Benihana restaurant chain.

Your families and loved ones also deserve a word of thanks and appreciation. It was through their unrelenting support that you found a way to make it to this day. And you should thank your professors for their wisdom, patience and experience in helping you reach your goals.

Today marks the end of your work toward a degree, and the start of the next chapter in your life.

It is a time of great excitement for you, though those feelings are likely accompanied by uncertainty, and in these tough economic times, anxiety.

Some of you will be heading to graduate school. Many of you will be embarking on careers and going on job interviews. Some aren't so sure what you'll be doing. Soon enough, you'll advance in your careers, start families and hopefully get involved in matters of importance to you and your communities.

The diplomas you've earned will serve as your ticket to a brighter future, no matter what career path you choose to pursue.

Education provides us with opportunities we would never have otherwise.

We just need to look at Supreme Court nominee Judge Sonia Sotomayor of New York to see that.

Coming from humble beginnings, Judge Sotomayor excelled in her undergraduate years in college and rose to the top of her Yale Law School class. She now stands poised to become the first Hispanic on our nation's highest court.

Whatever your immediate future holds, you are certainly graduating into a world of great turmoil and transformation.

As Americans, we face challenges in meeting our nation's energy needs, preserving our environment, and in reshaping our economy.

Divisive issues such as immigration reform and national security dominate the news.

But make no mistake: this is also a time of unbounded opportunity and a time to aspire to greatness.

To meet the many challenges we face as a state and a nation, it will take creative thinkers, innovators and motivators.

It will take new ideas and the boldness to carry them out.

City Tech has done an outstanding job preparing you for these challenges by helping you attain the ultimate prize – a quality education.

We all look forward to seeing you put to use the critical thinking and analytical skills you've learned here to attain your goals and help us all.

Once, a college degree meant you were set for life. Graduates went on to lifelong careers at the same company, working their way up through the ranks.

That's no longer true.

Today's college students can expect to have numerous jobs and multiple careers over their lifetimes.

Currently, in the U.S., one in four workers is employed by a company they have been with for less than a year. And half have been with their company for less than five years.

It's estimated the top ten in-demand jobs in the year 2010 did not exist in 2004.

Educator Karl Fisch sums up the challenge: "We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't been invented yet, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet."

We all need to be lifetime learners as we are challenged to simply keep up with the constant advance in technology and business practices.

We have to be regularly updated in order to stay competitive in our jobs. Think about it: Five years ago Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter didn't even exist. Can you imagine not being able to see Susan Boyle on YouTube?

And these technologies are not only a part of our personal lives; they are also an increasingly important part of professional communication and have been instrumental in the news business, advocacy and the political process.

The number of text messages sent and received every day now exceeds the population of the planet.

Google is now processing roughly one billion searches per day, up from 150 million just three years ago.

For us to be successful in this environment, we have to look forward and develop the products and technologies that will offer tangible benefits to a global marketplace.

We are facing emerging economic competitors in China and India, but we also have new entrepreneurial opportunities in those same places that didn't exist a few years ago.

It is my hope that you will be able to serve that global marketplace and pursue your career dreams right here in New York State.

New York is the third leading state for attracting science and engineering research funding as well as funding for life sciences research.

It is also home to world-class universities and life sciences research centers, including, of course, the New York City College of Technology.

Our future economy will be built on the creativity and vision of our best minds – those who will develop important new technologies, including nanotechnology, biotechnology, clean energy and homeland security technologies.

Our next great economic driver may begin in a lab here at City Tech or in someone's garage in Queens. Remember Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard started HP in a garage in Palo Alto.

Though I'm the state comptroller and monitor the state budget and our finances, I can't predict with confidence where today's economy will take us.

But let me assure you about the one thing, the one sure bet, that will be a constant in your life and in your career.

The one thing that will always remain the same ... is that nothing remains the same. Change will be your constant companion.

Don't be afraid of it. Change gives us opportunities to excel, to face new challenges and to exceed expectations.

Isn't that what going to college and earning your degree was all about?

Although change will continue, and the pace of change will continue to accelerate, I am sure you're well equipped to keep up.

In fact, the next great American success story could be sitting here today in a cap and gown.

However you choose to apply your education and training, I wish you the best of luck in creating your own personal success story.

Congratulations on your achievement in earning your degree today.