**Commencement Remarks**

**Fred Watson**

**May 23, 2019**

Good evening and welcome to the 69th Orange County Community College Commencement ceremony.

I am pleased to represent the Board of Trustees and can think of no greater assignment than to be standing before you tonight as we celebrate the SUNY Orange Class of 2019. Welcome graduates, families, friends, dignitaries, faculty, staff and guests.

*Recognize dignitaries here … if any (text to come as necessary)*

I want to congratulate each of our graduates on having reached this point on your academic journey. Only you … and perhaps family members or a few close friends … truly know the sacrifices you’ve made, the hardships you’ve overcome and the growth you’ve experienced in order to reach this most momentous of occasions.

And graduates, be sure to say a special thank you to those in your life who supported you when times were tough. They may not realize what their support meant to you, or how it helped you stay the course. Let them know how important they are to your success.

I think we all can agree that education can take on many forms, not all of which occur in a classroom. However, we can also agree that a college degree opens doors and gives you strength. It forges a foundation that prepares you for a lifetime of learning and success.

Tonight, I encourage the members of the SUNY Orange Class of 2019 to stride confidently through those open doors … continue to build upon the foundation you’ve set at SUNY Orange … and achieve all that your capabilities, talents, energy, passion and perseverance will allow you to accomplish.

Congratulations once again. I wish you the best of luck in all that you do.