

2019 Inver Hills Community College Commencement

Student Keynote: Hayley Kazmierczak

Good Evening!

Welcome friends, family and staff to the Inver Hills Community College 2019 Graduation. Let's all take a moment and thank all of those that have been supporting us through this crazy journey and who have helped us get to where we are planted today.

I am Hayley Kazmierczak and I am honored to be standing in front of you today. My goal is not only to celebrate graduation on this amazing day, but also to look ahead to the exciting next chapter, no matter what lies ahead for all of you.

Now graduates, this might be a weird thing to think about on a day like today, but I want you to think about your life...as if you were a tree. I know, I know, but hear me out.

We all started as a seed planted into this world, where you can get what is needed to nurture yourself along the way. Then our roots start to grow, and these are initially made up of your family and friends, and they have supported who you are today and will always keep you stable and grounded.

I have built my roots with my family, friends and coworkers, and they are the reason that after this ceremony it will be so hard to leave. This is not where our growth ends, as we will find ourselves in need of additional support above the ground. A substantial tree above the ground will require at least double the root support to remain healthy and stable.

While at Inver, we have found additional support in the form of classmates, faculty, tutors and so much more. Through my Inver Hills English class, I was able to meet one of my best friends just by sitting next to her, and I grew new friendships with a group of fellow students who now call me their "mom" figure. Think about the experiences, support and relationships you will take away.

Transition: Once we have our roots, it is time to get strong

This support has developed into strengths throughout our time here at Inver Hills these past years and has helped us to grow. Our trunk is the core of who we are today, where your strength is, and all your support systems that continue to nourish you. Think of everything we have all wrestled with over the past few years from homework deadlines, to writing papers and taking exams (not even including what life outside of school as thrown at you).

Life happens and these things shape your journey and change in many ways that you cannot predict. It will try to break you down, but you all have the strength to get through the hard times and it will bring on the good times. Life is all about strengthening yourself as individuals

and finding new opportunities. (This year I was able to get an internship that was a great opportunity and taught me a lot about myself and what I want to do for my future.)

This growth takes time and standing in front of you all, I realize that two years has gone by, and this time has been a very valuable thing. All of us have faced challenges and our trunks may have different numbers of rings, but we are leaving Inver Hills stronger and ready to face the future.

Transition: When it comes to life, you want to always keep growing and don't wait to do you.

Moving forward, we have certain branches that will change with experiences, people we meet, and our jobs. Reach for great heights, if you want to find a cure for cancer, find a cure! If you want to save a species, find ways to save them! After this ceremony find ways to branch out and don't be afraid of failing because like a tree you will continue to grow.

I hope someday to become a manager of a big corporation or run my own group home that helps people with disabilities. Life can feel like it is all falling apart sometimes when you lose some bark, a branch or some leaves here and there. Because below the ground you will always find support for the leaves still there that helps make your tree unique and beautiful.

So, picture how your tree resembles your life today, but also think what that tree looks like in five, ten, and even twenty years from today. Whether you are a PSEO student, here for two years, or for more than that, your branches reach in all directions. Your branches today will take the next step forward as you continue to grow and reach for the stars.

After crossing this stage and getting your diploma: use your support system, be strong, and never stop growing.

So, class of 2019, I leave you with this saying, "Live your life. Take chances. Be Crazy. Don't wait. Because right now is the oldest you've been and the youngest you will be ever again."
(Suzanne Collins).

I bet you all never thought that you would be leaving so soon. Thank you for your time and congratulations to all of you.

Thanks,

Hayley Kazmierczak