



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WLAC'S 50<sup>TH</sup> COMMENCEMENT  
HAD LARGEST CA COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE CLASS  
Senator Mitchell Told Grads "You Owe Us"**



From Top:  
**Senator Holly J. Mitchell** congratulates graduate.

**Alex Ingram** is ready to start lucrative career after 1-year training program.

**Deanna Graves** was able to complete her Bachelor's degree for \$100,000 less.

**Brandon Iweze** found a passion for Political Science at West and has been accepted to UCR as a junior.

"You owe us all a debt, public dollars finance community colleges," said Senator Holly J. Mitchell at the milestone 50<sup>th</sup> Commencement Ceremony at West Los Angeles College. "You know what we want? We want you to be the best you can possibly be. We're asking you to step up, step out, be the change makers, be excellent in your fields of study. California is the fifth largest economy in the world and it's counting on you to be the innovators to take us into the future."

This year's commencement not only marked the official start of a 12-month celebration of the College's golden anniversary, but was a historical first. West was one of only 15 California Community Colleges which conferred Bachelor's degrees. The 29 Dental Hygiene graduates made up the largest Baccalaureate class from a community college in the entire State, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Other speakers helping to mark this momentous day included Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Chancellor Dr. Francisco C. Rodriguez, LACCD Board Member Dr. Gabriel Buelna and Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager-Dove.

"I hope that you'll be purposeful in what you do," Kamlager-Dove told the graduates. "This is your life, it is the only one you get, so own it. It is my true joy to believe in you and what is next for you."

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## **WLAC'S 50<sup>TH</sup> COMMENCEMENT...continued**

“Next” for these new West alumni will vary widely as they use their career certificates to gain satisfying employment, transfer to universities as juniors, or use their dental hygiene Bachelor’s degrees to enter a field that pays nearly \$100,000 per year on average in California, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**1-YEAR TO HOLLYWOOD:** West, located in Culver City dubbed “The Heart of Screenland,” helped Alex Ingram find his calling and break into film and TV production crafts. During the unique one-year hands-on training program where students prepare for entry-level positions as grips, set-dressers, camera loaders and more, he worked behind the scenes for major events at the Los Angeles Convention Center and at Sony Picture Studios preparing for the Coachella Festival. Ingram is looking forward to securing membership in the professional trade union International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) and continuing to work as a grip in the entertainment industry.

**2 YEARS TO A UNIVERSITY:** When Brandon Iweze started at West, he struggled to find his interest and major. But he did locate the college TRIO program which provides first generation and other non-traditional college students with academic and professional guidance as well as a place to fit in. Having completed his general education courses and Associate degree, Iweze is transferring to the University of California Riverside as a junior. “At West, I discovered my love for Political Science,” explained Iweze. He will major in International Affairs at the university.

**4-YEAR BACHELOR’S DEGREE:** Deanna Graves was part of West’s first Dental Hygiene Baccalaureate class. She is a graduate of King Drew Magnet High School where she had a pre-dental hygiene emphasis. Graves planned to go out of state to complete her training in dental hygiene but discovered West had launched a Bachelor’s degree program and decided to stay close to home. At West she was able to receive comparable training in state-of-the-art facilities for approximately \$20,000 as compared to nearby USC with a cost of over \$122,000. Dental hygienists in California earn \$97,400 on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Members of the class of 2018 have many starting points and have many paths to choose from here at West, explained Aracely Aguiar, the college Vice President of Academic Affairs. “Our job is to make sure they all realize the college motto – “Go West. Go Far.”

*West Los Angeles College is located at 9000 Overland Avenue, Culver City, CA 90230. The college is a ACCJC-accredited community college providing full-time, part-time and online paths to university transfer and career preparation.*