Good-evening, I am so honored to have been invited to speak tonight for this very special ceremony. I would like to take a moment recognized Richard Hoffman, Cooperative Education Coordinator and the amazing faculty and staff here at the Hartford Area Career and Technology Center and to thank you for your commitment and hard work preparing these talented students.

Special greetings and congratulations to the excellent students being inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. I am so very proud of you and believe the sky is the limit to what you can achieve as you continue to engage, learn, work, serve and grow.

As you know, we all stand on the shoulders of others who lift us up. Join me now in acknowledging your family and friends who are here tonight to support you.

This is a very important honor and I am sure, it was not easy. As you reflect on your accomplishments, remember the bar is high, and that we expect great things from you.
I would like to share just a little about my college. River Valley Community College has locations in Claremont, Keene and online and we will soon be co-locating on the campus on Granite State in downtown Claremont.

RVCC have been serving the educational needs of its community since 1968, currently enrolling over 1000 students in thirty-five career-oriented programs, supporting the attainment of highly specialized skills necessary to successfully enter the job market in a number of technical, business and health-oriented fields.

We work closely with business and industry also to prepare students for careers in manufacturing and advanced manufacturing as well as a number of other fields.

To the students being inducted tonight into the National Technical Honor Society, you should be very proud of your accomplishment, we are and we know that it was no easy task.

The National Technical Honor Society currently serves approximately 200,000 members and awards over $160,000 in scholarships each year; for over 30 years they have been an acknowledged leader in the recognition of outstanding student achievement in career and technical education. Give yourself a round of applause.
Career Technical Education (CTE) is helping our nation meet the very real and immediate challenges of economic development, student achievement and global competitiveness. More than 14 million students are enrolled in CTE—encompassing every state, with programs in nearly 1,300 public high schools and 1,700 two-year-colleges.

You are in great company and represent some of the best and brightest students in the country. You are our best critical thinkers and creative problem solvers and you are firmly on a path leading to some of the most competitive jobs in the country.

The skills that you have are both academic and technical in nature and will enable you to define a brighter future for yourself, your family and community.

Nationally, there is significant discussion on the importance of integrating academic and technical education. This is critical and provides important options to students.

Combining the quality and rigor of both the academic and technical environments helps develop well-rounded and better prepared students entering the work-force.

One strategy being utilized across the country for improving outcomes - encourages combining basic college preparatory coursework with career-technical education (CTE) in the high school curriculum.
The aim is to make high school more meaningful and motivating for more students, to increase graduation rates, and to prepare graduates for a range of postsecondary options.

One proven outcome of integrating Academic and Technical Learning is that it shows the real-life applications of education.

Malcolm X, is credited with saying, tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. I believe that the preparation you are obtaining from The Hartford Area Career and Technology Center is preparing you in a very directed and supported manner for the future.

You are exactly the type of students that we are looking for at River Valley Community College as you continue and expand your learning.

RVCC recently lowered tuition by 5% and we are fortunate to have financial aid and scholarships available to students wishing to take the next step.

National research indicates that aligning academic and technical education benefits students and the workforce.

CTE courses inherently provide contexts for applied or experiential learning, these experiences also deliver content in a relevant, authentic, and often times more motivating context.

The ability to create explicit connections is critical if students are to transfer their knowledge and skills outside the classroom.
What have also learned that when academic and CTE teachers work together to integrate strategies, a lot of reciprocal learning occurs. For example, academic teachers learn contextual applications which allow them to engage all their students and CTE teachers demonstrate how their programs contribute to student academic achievement.

Most importantly, as we examine the landscape, CTE is no longer seen as an alternative to postsecondary education but an achievable goal for all high school students that expands practical learning.

When students see the connections between academic subjects such as English/Language Arts, Mathematics and Science on the one hand and Career/Technical courses on the other, they are more apt to believe education and training are important and attainable.

Increasingly, schools are using real-life approaches and hands-on projects to blend academic and career/technical content to make learning more authentic and I hope more fun for students.

Nothing is impossible - If you believe

Nothing is unattainable - If you believe

No turning back - If you believe

As you continue to maximize your success I encourage you have a vision and career plan for your life. Write it down and look at it often and include the steps that it will take you to get from here to there.
I brought with me special gifts for each of you tonight from River Valley Community College and I encourage you to consider River Valley as your next step and please encourage others to visit us as well.

In closing,

One of my favorite writers, James Allen writes that “We will become as small as our controlling desire, and as great as our dominant aspiration.”

In essence, we achieve what we focus on with determination and persistence.

My wish for you is that you will continue to strive for excellence and achieve your dreams.

Congratulations and thank you.