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Cambridge College Pathways to Success Program Graduates Ten Women

CAMBRIDGE, MA—On Wednesday, June 25th ten women redefined the meaning of courage and perseverance. In a room full of their family and friends, these ten women graduated from the Pathways to Success program, a Cambridge College and Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) collaboration designed to allow individuals a second chance at education.

For over three months, these women—ranging between the ages of 17 and 52, nine of whom were single mothers and the other an expectant mother—invested 30 hours a week and their trust in the program they believed would help better their lives, future careers and educational pursuits. The program, which was funded by a DTA grant, was created to provide courses and additional support that offered students an opportunity to better understand their own strengths and build their confidence, while gaining concrete skills to increase their employability.

“I am a strong believer that education is a tool that can create social change,” said Barbara Reid, Pathways to Success program coordinator and director of the Cambridge College Undergraduate Human Services program. “However, it won’t solve all of the problems in the world. It is our job to give you the tools to make a contribution.” Reid applauded the women for their persistence and dedication to the program, as she said they all faced obstacles and challenges along the way, including transportation and child-care issues that threatened to keep the women out of the classroom. “You are all unique individuals but face all of the same challenges. You have shown strength and you have conquered adversity when given unfair circumstances in life. To say we have all changed is an understatement,” added Reid.

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Reid shared that most of the women entered the program guarded and unsure of themselves and the class, but all knew what they wanted out of it for their future. “They realized that who they were ran deep inside them,” said Reid, backing her statement with a description of how each woman was transformed because of this experience. These stories were revealed in the book Our Destiny to Achieve, a compilation of essays written by the women during the program addressing their dreams, their reasons for returning to school and what this decision means for their families.

In her essay, one woman wrote: “Going to college makes me very proud of myself. It makes me feel like I’m able to accomplish anything I want. I have plenty of reasons [for returning to college] but the most important is making a good example for my daughter and brother. I want them to see that just because life is a struggle it doesn’t mean you should give up on your dreams.”

In a brief address, DTA Commissioner Julia Kehoe applauded the students for their accomplishment.

“I know for sure that you are greatness,” said FeLisa Walker, an instructor in the Pathways program and a 2008 Cambridge College graduate. “You have taken this next step to your futures. Please, please continue your journeys.”

The Department of Transitional Assistance, formerly known as the Department of Public Welfare, is the state agency responsible for administering public assistance programs for needy citizens of the Commonwealth. Located within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department ensures that the emergency and transitional needs of individuals and families of the Commonwealth are met through a combination of federal and state funded programs. Massachusetts has a comprehensive system of programs and supports to provide to individuals and families in need in order to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.

Founded in 1971, Cambridge College is a private, non-profit institution dedicated to providing academically excellent, time-efficient, and cost-effective higher education for a diverse population of working adults for whom those opportunities may have been limited or denied. Cambridge College has sites in Cambridge, Springfield, and Lawrence, MA; Memphis, TN, Chesapeake and South Boston, VA; Augusta, GA; Ontario, CA; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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