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2023 Travelers EDGE Graduation Keynote

Speech

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TEXT: 2023 Travelers EDGE Graduation Keynote Speech

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Victoria Valle sits before the white screen.

TEXT: Victoria Valle

Travelers EDGE

2023 Graduate Keynote Speaker

CCSU '23

(SPEECH)

Victoria Valle: Hi everyone! My name is Victoria Valle, and I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to speak with you all today and express my utmost excitement to celebrate the Travelers EDGE Graduating Class of 2023.

We did it! We finally made it to the finish line! I am proud of you, and you should be very proud of yourself. Rejoice that you demonstrated perseverance, grit, strength, and determination as you could withstand all the hiccups as well as the highs and lows of your unique college journey.

And now, we are about to begin a new chapter in our lives. Whether that is starting a full-time career here under the red umbrella, taking time off to travel and spend time with family and friends, or maybe you'll stay on that academic drive and pursue a masters or Ph.D. The choice is yours. But before that chapter begins, do not forget to take a minute to reflect upon this tremendous achievement and all that has led up to this moment.

A famous quote by John Dewey reads: “We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” Therefore, I would like to share a little bit about my story and why I am honored to be a Travelers EDGE graduate.

I applied to this program in my senior year of high school, which felt like I was taking a giant leap of faith at the time. There is an extra amount of pressure as a first-generation college student to graduate from college before you even start, and an overwhelming feeling at times to hear what the weight of higher education means and what it can do for one’s life. However, as I navigated through college, I am thankful for the generous support instilled throughout the program’s pipeline and key levers on and off campus that helped ensure and deliver what “EDGE” stands for: Empowering Dreams for Graduation and Employment.

With Travelers EDGE, my academic experience turned out to be more impactful and rewarding.

For one, I am privileged to be a part of this year’s graduating class; and very appreciative of the hands of many individuals and opportunities that have helped develop and contributed to building qualities of my character, professionalism, and network. Over the years, the program has taught me about the importance of a personal brand, getting comfortable being uncomfortable, showing up with presence and purpose, and that there is strength and power in being vulnerable and transparent with who we are. It has helped build an unshakable confidence that we have what it takes to be successful, and we will be successful.

“EDGE is the vehicle, and we are the drivers.” Over time, I have realized that this metaphor applies to all stages of lifelong learning. And now that we are graduating, where we were once driving, maybe a Honda with a full tank of gas, GPS, and heated seats, we are now cruising in a Porsche. Meaning that we have more lofty goals and focus going forward, and we can feel empowered now that we have this degree in the back seat. In other words, now that our car is even more equipped, we can set our sights on greater milestones and be ready for what is next.

On that note, I would like to ask you to reflect on the past few years and remind yourself to embrace your journey. No matter how daunting this challenge may have once seemed, and the times when you may have begun to rethink the experience and your choices along the way. I

want to illuminate that you have already accomplished so much and will continue to do remarkable things!

Let us remember how much love and guidance we have received over the years and try to make it a part of our responsibility to pay it forth, full circle. Let us use our education and what we have learned as a tool to help those around us, and always remember that although we are graduating, we will always be a part of Travelers EDGE, and we are excellence on purpose.

And for those entering the program or almost at your finish line: Get ready! You got this! Finish strong!

I am happy you benefit from the same amazing program manager, academic partners, structured pipeline, and on-campus cohorts. Please take advantage of all the opportunities and resources it offers, don't be discouraged when challenges arise or when mistakes happen, understand that failing and quitting are two different things, and do not be afraid to ask for help or support along the way. Finally, after hearing me today, if you only remember one thing, remember that you are a part of this Travelers EDGE family, which means something.

Thank you, and congratulations everyone!

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