Thank you first to Dr. Linda Lacy for your service as President and Superintendent, and members of the faculty and administration, members of the Cerritos College Board of Trustees, family and friends, and -- of course -- the graduates.

I am very pleased – and honored – to be here today to pay tribute to the Cerritos College class of 2010.

I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about what I wanted to talk about today. Commencement speeches come in all varieties.

Some are meant to be wise, and some funny.

Some are designed to be humorous.

Others are inspirational – while some are all of these things.

But, I’ve sat where all of you are before – and the best commencement addresses I’ve heard all had one thing in common.

They were really short.

I’m well aware I’m one of the last things standing between you and your diploma.

And since there are several hundred of you – let’s just say I don’t want you to become too restless.

So first let me congratulate you on what is a very fine achievement.

You've been strong and toughed it out.

You should be very proud.

Let me also congratulate the family and friends who are here tonight in support of the graduates.

You provided important support throughout their pursuit of higher education – financially and or emotionally.
Success is almost always a shared victory – and although your names may not be on the diplomas awarded today – you share equally in the satisfaction of a job well done.

I am personally excited for all of the graduates because I am a big fan of community colleges – and Cerritos College in particular since it is in my own backyard and I've seen this college grow and prosper in the decades I've lived in Cerritos.

I firmly believe – I passionately believe – that a strong and vibrant community college system is critical to a strong and vibrant job base and economy in Los Angeles County and the State of California.

It’s also critical to a healthy manufacturing industry.

We can’t have a healthy local economy without a skilled and educated workforce.

And where do we look to help provide much of that skilled and educated workforce?

You guessed it – community colleges.

Today, there are more than eleven hundred community colleges in the United States with nearly 12 million people enrolled.

Right here in California, there are 2.9 million students enrolled in 112 different community colleges.

These institutions play a vital role in our society.

The majority of our nation’s healthcare professionals get their training from community colleges.

Community colleges also provide training to critical first response professions such as firefighters and police officers.

At community colleges, people can continue to learn at any point in their lives.

Fast-paced technology and multiple career changes create opportunities for people to return to community colleges again and again.
Throughout our country – many people who are leaders in their fields got their start at community colleges.

People like Lt. Colonel Eileen Collins, the first woman to pilot a space shuttle.

The CEO's of more than a dozen Fortune 500 companies.

Former Presidential candidate Ross Perot.

And a fashion industry icon you might have heard of – named Calvin Klein.

Today you join an elite group of the 35 percent of Americans who hold an associate's or higher degree.

Only one of every three Americans has attained what you will attain today.

And many of you, I suspect, are among the first in your families to attend college.

That is exclusive company, and membership does have its privileges.

Okay graduates.

It’s time now for that part in the commencement speech where I’m supposed to leave you with some sage advice.

The kind that you'll remember.

The kind of advice that during your career you'll have certain experiences that will cause you to reflect back to this speech.

You'll think to yourselves -- “I remember when that guy from the County talked about this – what was his name again?”

Your education gives you the knowledge and confidence to begin a career or to pursue further studies.

Your income potential will rise, and you will be more agile on the job market.

I believe the technical term is “street cred.”
But credentials and career prospects are one matter.

How you live your life is another.

I do not pretend to know the answer of how best to do that.

But I have been blessed in my life to have heard some pretty good advice that I would like to pass on to you, and it is this:

Get in the game.

It is advice that is short, sweet, and useful.

Not a bad combination.

It is that simple.

Get in the game.

You may be wondering why I am telling you this, so here is my reasoning.

Sometimes graduates believe that their degree is a magic wand and that success will easily come their way.

But in reality, your success depends on your own determination and will. It requires the same work ethic and spirit of hope that took you through Cerritos College, and perhaps allowed you to balance your education with job and family demands.

When you leave this campus, degree in hand, take a deep breath, and jump in.

Get in the Game.

You can apply for jobs or transfer to four-year colleges with confidence.

You can start your own business.

You can use your skills as a volunteer and help change lives.

And yes, like it or not, you can even be a County Supervisor.
Although, I would probably advise you to consider that path with some degree of caution.

Seriously, though, do not ever doubt yourself.

You have proved that you have what it takes to get in the game.

Now it is up to you never to let up.

If you are smart, and apparently you are because you are here today, then you are also humble.

You may therefore wonder whether you are truly good enough to put yourself out there.

Today I am here to tell you that you are good enough to get in the game, in whatever passion you choose to pursue.

I also am here to ask you to remember what you already know, that your education is not just about you.

Your knowledge, your skills, and your great creativity have the potential to benefit the lives of everyone around you.

If you go into business – become a great leader and manager.

If you go into healthcare, know and care for your patients.

If you go into technology, work on ideas that provide useful innovations.

Education – inspire your students.

Government, human services, criminal justice – uphold the highest standards of compassion and fairness.

Whatever you do, wherever life leads you, give it your all.

There is infinite joy in knowing that you are contributing to something much greater than yourself, that your skills and ideas are needed and valued by many.

There is a special spirit on this campus.
This community fully recognizes the drive and potential of the students here at Cerritos College.

The drive and potential of you.

All of us here recognize it.

So do employers and universities.

We believe that community college graduates like you have the potential to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Getting there is up to you.

Please do not hold back.

Get in the game.

You are good enough.

You are better than good enough.

Thank you and congratulations.

I wish you all the best.