November 13, 2018

Greetings Worker Retraining Advisory Board:

My name is Kathleen Belisle and I will be graduating from Clark College in December 2018. I have been a part of the Worker Retraining Program since beginning my journey in early 2014. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for the opportunities I have received to pursue a dream I never thought possible. In 2012, I became a mother. Shortly after, I became unemployed and lost my father just weeks later. In 6 short months, my life drastically changed. I was challenged with providing for my daughter and used what retirement I had to handle my father’s affairs. I recognized that I was at an extremely pivotal point in life and could be swept in a multitude of directions, some less desirable than others.

After losing my job, my dad suggested enrolling in college. I graduated high school early, was licensed as an insurance agent at age 18, moved on to work in corporate, and felt I had done well up until this point. These were the excuses I used anyway; the truth was I was scared. Life had a forcibly different idea in store and encouraged me to be brave and open my mind to new opportunities. I slowly began to piece together the admissions process and applications. I familiarized myself with degrees and classes. It wasn’t until I met Rebecca Kleiva that the pieces came together, and I was able to develop a clear path. I told myself I would give it one term and if my life didn’t fall completely apart because I was taking time to better myself, I would try another term. Sure enough, life continued on, I survived my first term, and a fire was lit.

I have recently completed my AA in Business Administration (DTA/MRP) with honors, as well as my AAS in Accounting with honors. In a few short weeks, I will be finishing my Bachelors in Applied Science in Applied Management (BASAM) degree with a 4.0. It has been a privilege to be part of Clark College’s first bachelor degree program for business majors. The wealth of knowledge I have gained throughout this journey has equipped me with the confidence to return to the workforce with stronger communication skills, relevant knowledge, and the foundation to serve as a leader. The desire to continue my educational journey has been cemented with hopes to receive my MBA in the future.

All of this has been made possible by the Worker Retraining Program and more importantly, someone willing to spend the time to hear my story, see an opportunity to invest in me during a low point in my life, and the continued support offered to achieve my goals. I want to thank each of you for your commitment to help provide students with opportunities for growth who have experienced hardships. Your work directly impacts the community and families such as mine. I have two girls, ages 6 and 2, who have known nothing other than mom being a student. Both girls often mimic my work habits and our kitchen table has transformed to a meeting space where we work on homework, color, paint, practice spelling and math, along with the occasional science experiment. What has been instilled in me is being instilled in them. I couldn’t have done it without you.

Sincerest regards,

Kathleen Belisle