



## PRESS RELEASE

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**THIS RELEASE CONTAINS A PHOTO**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 14, 2022

### **Illinois Central College Graduates Turn Their Tassels During 1<sup>st</sup> In-Person Commencement Ceremony Since 2019**

Illinois Central College hosted its first in-person commencement ceremony since 2019 on Saturday, May 14, at 2 pm at the Peoria Civic Center. Students and their families, faculty and staff, and community members attended the in-person ceremony or joined the live-streamed event.

"Today we have many reasons to celebrate as we recognize YOU and this significant achievement," said ICC President Dr. Sheila Quirk-Bailey. "Actually, we have 2,039 reasons to celebrate, which is how many students have qualified for graduation and completed their requirements."

During the ceremony, participating graduates were presented with their diplomas. The Student of the Year award was presented to Raena Holloway, while Lari LaBello and Melissa Grunow were recognized with faculty awards.

For the commencement address, the college welcomed back DeMarcus Hamilton, Northern Illinois University Admission Counselor, Peoria community advocate, and 2007 ICC alumnus. Hamilton shared his inspirational message of how he persevered through trying times and encouraged graduates with the phrase "don't hate on nobody, don't wait on nobody."

Student speaker Raena Holloway also shared a message with the graduates. Holloway discussed her journey at ICC and her lessons learned. "Being adopted from Guatemala, I know how important and rare opportunities can be... Illinois Central College is truly a 'Smart Choice' because it is a college of immense opportunity and better yet, incredible people."

Dr. Quirk-Bailey shared, "As we celebrate each and every one of you graduating today, please know *you* are our inspiration. *You* are the reason... we are inspired beyond measure. We are inspired to find new ways of removing barriers to your success... we are inspired to never give up on our dreams, just as you refused to give up on yours, especially during the challenges of the past two years; and we are inspired to do our very best, every day.... because of you."

The ICC community was encouraged to wear blue and gold and share photos on social media using the hashtag #ICCGRAD2022. A [graduate toolkit](#) with social media frames and filters, printable signs, computer and phone backgrounds, and a music playlist was also created.

A recording of the ceremony is now available for graduates to share with family and friends. Graduates who preregistered and submitted personalized slides, as well as any graduate receiving a degree or certificate, can download their name slide to share. All links are available at [icc.edu/commencement](http://icc.edu/commencement).

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