If your dreams don’t scare you, they’re not big enough. That was graduation just a month ago, and that’s one of our student’s caps. I believe in dreams. I believe so much in our students’ dreams. And I’m very fond of saying every student’s dream matters. Why does it matter? It matters because of their lives. It matters because they are trying to make changes in their lives.

So I want to share three stories with you about three of our students and how their dreams mattered and how guided pathways made their dreams reality. I want to start with Eliana Cintron [phonetic]. She was one of our early college high school students who was dually enrolled. And as we know, our pathways for dually enrolled students are extremely important. So not only did she graduate with her high school diploma, she also graduated with her associate’s degree. First in her family. Her family moved here from Puerto Rico. And Eliana had a dream to become a scientist. So our early college high school program as well as other dually enrolled programs, our students have experiential education as a part of that.

So she learned how to test DNA. She learned that she wanted to become someone who worked with genes. And so as part of that she had an internship actually at NASA, the youngest student intern at NASA. And she was awarded a full scholarship starting this fall to go to Case Western Reserve University. Her grandmother became so inspired by what Eliana was doing, her grandmother started at Lorain County Community College. They walked together on graduation day just a month ago. Our dual enrollment program, we’ve built out pathways for every dually enrolled student because we want to get them to the finish line. And what’s even more exciting for Eliana and now her grandmother is their entire family has a better future.

The second student that I want to share with you is Patty Rhone [phonetic]. Patty was a nursing student, and Patty unfortunately when she got to her capstone course, she failed it twice. So policies are extremely important as part of pathways, and revisiting your policies through an equity lens. And so that was a deep dive that we took at Lorain County Community College. And Patty appealed her dismissal from the nursing program because the policy was if you fail a course twice in the curriculum, you’re dismissed. So she came to meet with me, and I have my own policy and that is I sit with any student who gets to a final appeal to me because I want to know, I want to see them, I want to hear what is their dream.

And so Patty was an LPN doing home hospice care and she was in this last class then of the RN sequence and so when she came to me, she brought a bag of letters from all of the families whose families that she took care of their dying loved one. And they all talked about what a wonderful nurse she was. And so I asked her Patty, what’s the barrier, what’s the obstacle that is preventing you, and she said I just study so hard. I don’t know what happens when I go to take the final exam.

So we got her personalized tutoring so that it would help to alleviate some of her anxiety, but I still had the policy to deal with so I overrode the decision and we needed to look at the policy of why we dismiss students and how we can go about the readmission process differently.

And my final student is Kenny Glen. Kenny was in the military for 10 years and then worked at a steel plant for 20 years and then was laid off. And so he came back, having been out of school for over 30 years and placed in the lowest level math class. He became one of our CUNY ASAP model SAIL participants. And so we’ve replicated that model. He actually graduated with two associate’s degrees in less than three years because of all of the extra supports that we’ve put together.

Collectively they represent the 2,000 students who earned associate degrees and certificates this past spring, and that has been actually a 78 percent increase in number of degrees awarded and a 237 percent increase in our percentage of our IPEDS percentage from 2011 ’til today. So I firmly believe that every student’s dream matters and truly if your dreams don’t scare you, they’re not big enough. Thank you.

**[END OF FILE]**