January 10, 2018

Dear Dr. Adam L. Rockman,

With great gratitude, I'm writing this letter of appreciation as a QC Alumnus: the appreciation of your collaborative effort (Queens College staff) in creating a diverse community to make education accessible for all cultures and roles at Queens College. I was looking through my portfolios I've written for the programs I graduated from. I must say it is bittersweet for me because I've been on quiet a journey as I was achieving many goals at Queens College along with other transpiring and life-changing events. Some bitter, and some sweet, but they all have molded me into a strong role model that I am today.

My first college experience began with Queens College, and came to an end with Queens College with many accomplished goals and accolades. I completed my bachelors as a double major – Childhood Education (1-6) and Applied Mathematics. There were life-changing events – married and had my first son, towards the last year of my undergraduate years so I took off 3 semesters. The thought of going back to school as a wife, and mom seemed impossible, knowing most of my colleagues and classmates are not familiar with that lifestyle, they couldn't possibly understand how the student obligations can be overwhelming when I have other obligations depending on me. However, I never fell for my fear until I had some concrete evidence that it truly, physically, and mentally was impossible for a mom to go back to school and make her dreams a reality.

Going back to finish my last year in my undergraduate with a 9-month old was like driving a car with no gas, one had to push the car to get to the nearest gas station. I pushed myself to finish my last year of student teaching, with sleepless nights, demanding hours, odd study hours in the middle of the night, and managing motherhood, housewife, domesticity, and the little things that suddenly became transparent now than it did when I was single. Well, I made it to my gas station with cum laude and Dean's List! To see that year complete with honorable status, gave me all the fuel of overjoy, confidence, and determination I needed to pursue my education furthermore.

Going back to Queens College as a mom made me realize how much I took Queens College for granted. The physical structure, the social climate, the supportive staff, the encouraging campus advertisements (yes, those do make a difference), and the campus lifestyle all made a difference in my attitude towards accomplishing my next academic goals: Queens College kept me going, and made it possible for me to even dream of pursuing my education to the next level.

I went for my post-baccalaureate in Secondary Education Mathematics (grades 7-12). I pioneered that year that it brought out a side of me that I never knew – perseverance: the perseverance that continued my pursuance in Masters of Science in Education (while expecting my second child). I grew fonder of how Queens College is enriched with diversity. It's **easy to print on a brochure a college is diverse**, but it's what the college **offered that welcomed diversity with open arms.** Queens College did just that - the convenience of hybrid courses, extensive computer lab hours, and affordable child development center made the goal of completing a Masters a reality for a mom.

I didn't take any breaks with my second child as I did with my first one. After experiencing college life with two children, I regret not continuing my attendance while I got married, and was pregnant with my first child. Hence, why I want my experience to be a reminder to all those mothers who have the dream of going back to college to act up on it, and start their experience at Queens College.

When you dream, you have desires to keep you going, when you act upon your dream, you have reality that keeps you going. Queens College has been diverse in not just the population, but in its support system, competent staff, and numerous programs that tailor to our accommodations. Who knows what I might dream of next, but I know I will always come back to Queens College for the reasons you now know why.

Thank you Queens College for building not just a starting point in my future, but a secure future. I'm currently a New York City public school teacher teaching at P.S. 117 (the irony of the location being close to Queens College...ha ha ha). I teach fourth grade, and I make sure to remind all of my students every year, never give up because you never know how far you can reach. I hope my message comes across to many Queens College students who've experienced a lack of confidence, destitute, or loss of hope, as a turning point in their lives that they can achieve.

Fondly yours,

Nadia Mawjzada-Azeem

Nadia Mawjzada-Azeem
QC Alumnus



Dr.Lila Swell, my son, Elham, and I at the 2016 Kappa Delta Pi initiation ceremony





My two children, Elham and Ismael, and I at the Commencement Ceremony for Masters of Science in Education



P.S. – I don't have any pictures from the 2012 Commencement Ceremony for my undergraduate because my older son was in the hospital.