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St. Croix Educational Complex Class of 2025 Celebrates Resilience, Identity, and Ambition

In a ceremony filled with pride, reflection, and resilience, the SCEC Class of 2025 celebrated their graduation with powerful messages from education leaders, heartfelt student speeches, and a keynote address from media entrepreneur Janeisha John.

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Janeka Simon **May 22, 2025**

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SCEC 2025 GRADUATES. By. ALVIN BURKE

On Wednesday, 186 students of the St. Croix Educational Complex Class of 2025 made their official transition from students to graduates, proudly embracing their self-ascribed identity: Exuberant, Xenial, Outstanding, True, Irreplaceable, Confident, and Exotic.

Speaking to the graduates, Education Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington praised their choice of descriptors and noted the power of mindset. “You don’t need to give up any part of your minds to negativity,” she told the students. While disappointments and setbacks are part of life, she said, “one thing you have to do for you is believe in you.”

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. continued the theme, advising students to guard their dreams and pursue them relentlessly. “Always make sure that you stick to them. There’s no timeline for your dreams,” he said. “I’m still planning what I’m going to do with my life.”

Salutatorian Vivia Webster echoed the sentiment, encouraging her classmates to recognize and celebrate their own achievements. “I’ve learned that just because the world doesn’t always clap for your hard work doesn’t mean that you didn’t deserve applause,” she said. Webster highlighted the range of accomplishments within the graduating class—from students heading to NASA Space Academy and UVI summer programs, to a senior coaching the territory’s junior Olympic sailing team. Others, she joked, might just be “counting down until their 18th birthday, because sometimes the little things are a big deal too.”

She closed by urging her classmates to live by the very traits they had chosen to represent themselves: “Be exuberant in your joy, xenial in your kindness, outstanding in your hustle, true to your roots, irreplaceable wherever life takes you, and confident even when the way forward isn’t clear.”

Valedictorian Samir Boucenna focused on the obstacles the class had overcome—including classroom challenges and COVID-era disruptions. “Every single challenge we faced has built us into an unbreakable wall,” he declared, adding that by comparison, “tertiary education would thus be a cakewalk.”

Keynote speaker Janeisha John—model, pageant winner, TV host, and network producer—shared a deeply personal story from her own senior year. She recounted how she missed the application deadlines for her dream colleges. “I felt defeated,” she admitted. “I felt like I’d failed myself, because I had done all the things to get to that point... and because I missed one step, I wasn’t able to do that.”

That moment, however, led her to pivot, and she ultimately enrolled at the University of the Virgin Islands, which she described as “probably one of the best decisions I made.” Her experiences at UVI launched her into the pageant circuit, where she was crowned Miss Virgin Islands, and later into a 12-year career in Hollywood that began with a one-way ticket to Los Angeles. Her work in television grew into a career helping build a media network now valued in the billions. “Utilizing all the tools, lessons, [and] support from the community here in the Virgin Islands... helped me to get to that place in life,” she said.

John encouraged the Class of 2025 to remember and embody their core values, even when others doubt them. “Don’t listen to the naysayers, don’t listen to the people who would doubt you. Listen to the people who believe in you,” she said. Reflecting on her own journey, she added, “One thing I’ve learned throughout my journey, coming from a place like this, is that I’m a survivor. We are all survivors.”

That resilience, she said, is a defining trait of Virgin Islanders and one that will carry this class forward. While she didn’t wade into the ongoing debate over whether members of the diaspora should return home, John urged the graduates to keep St. Croix at the center of their identity—no matter where life takes them. “Whether or not you are physically here, living abroad, traveling the world, find creative ways to still be a part of the solution,” she said. “Always remember where

home is."

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