

*On behalf of the SCF student body comes now Ms. Vida Biggins. She is president of the Nu Zeta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society and the African-American Student Union, and she is a Selby Scholar. Ms. Biggins will graduate from SCF in May with her Associate in Arts degree and will continue her studies at Columbia University.*

Vida Biggins:

On behalf of students across State College of Florida's campuses and counties, I would like to officially extend a warm welcome to our sixth president, Dr. Carol Probstfeld.

As the next generation of thinkers and doers, CEOs and MBAs, entrepreneurs and scientists, teachers and nurses and maybe even a future college president—

We the students need a president who understands the marriage of practical and scholarly pursuit.

We need a leader who will champion a vision that provides a way to a college education for every student who has the will.

We need an administrator who will provide tools that make more efficient our labors over experiments and reports.

Most importantly, we need a president who provides a strong role model as a professional leader.

Today we celebrate the president who matches that description, Dr. Carol Probstfeld.

Dr. Probstfeld has embraced SCF's commitment to provide educational opportunities for a wide range of students.

She is a strong advocate for students and she radiates support and encouragement when she is among us.

Let me explain why that encouragement is so important to students like me.

When I was a child, a social studies teacher told me that school was not for me and I would not succeed. I was just a kid, and I believed that teacher.

I dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and for 10 years I worked in customer service. During that time, I became fascinated by a radio program about science and I determined that one day I would pursue a career in medicine. That's right—me, the ninth grade dropout.

Providentially, I made my way to State College of Florida. As I was putting together my class schedule, the teacher's discouraging words still haunted me.

But here I discovered advisors and professors who listened to my dreams and goals, and who believed in me and told me I *could* and *would* succeed.

Their confidence in me helped my confidence to grow. At SCF I have maintained a high GPA, and I ran for leadership positions and found they suited me, and I was awarded a prestigious scholarship.

For the past year I have interned at the Roskamp Institute and I'm coauthoring a scientific article.

After I graduate in May, I plan to major in neurological science and behavioral biology and establish a career in neuroradiology. And yesterday I learned that I will be pursuing my next degree at Columbia University. That's right--me, the ninth grade dropout.

When I first came here, I thought of SCF as just a stepping-stone. But I have come to see that SCF has molded me into a completely different person and has given me a far more expansive perspective on life.

Thank you, SCF, and thank you, Dr. Probstfeld, for your commitment to preparing us for future positions in which we can honor the legacy and investment of our College.

On behalf of SCF students, I pledge that we will make you proud, and I applaud you for already making us proud by your example.