

## LAWSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **DeLucas Tells Lawson State Graduates to ‘Dream Big with Wide Open Eyes’**

Birmingham AL (May 13, 2017) - Spring Commencement Exercises of Lawson State Community College were held on May 13 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center for the more than 300 graduates participating and their families and friends.

Dr. Lawrence DeLucas, first civilian scientist-astronaut for NASA and former University of Alabama at Birmingham professor, served as the commencement address speaker and through message and reflection took the audience to heights unknown to most.

He shared a personal philosophy with the graduates, “Go forth with big dreams and wide open eyes and continue to evolve and improve,” he said. “Turn dreams into action,” he said. “Dreams are our best ambitions magnified when we let them reach their full potential. They are our capabilities extended to the maximum.”

DeLucas talked about some personal achievements and also some challenges, including his dreams of being a scientist and eventually an astronaut. “I always had a love for science, but I didn’t know what I wanted to do at first in college,” he said. “Actually, I lacked the confidence to know that I could even be a scientist. I realized with hard work and passion that I could.”

His dreams and hard work helped him reach his maximum potential when in 1990, he was selected as a payload specialist to fly aboard the seven-person crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia. During the 14 day mission, the longest space flight in history at that time, he travelled more than six million miles, completing 221 orbits of earth and logging 331 hours in space.

Even after seven times of applying to become an astronaut and two years of training for the mission, his hopes and aspirations never dimmed. He said that this achievement was a result of his preparations in life. DeLucas said the one piece of advice given by successful dreamers worldwide is to never give up hope. “Throw off the by liners, sail away from the safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sail and explore, dream and discover,” he said.

DeLucas also told the Class of 2017 that a dreamer will always be a dreamer unless you do something about it achieve and open doors. “Use these key attributes in life to assist you that include optimism,

passion and persistence.” In going forward, he said, “Think about being bold in the way that you approach life. Reach for those lofty dreams and do everything that you can to make them a reality.”

After his address, Dr. DeLucas was presented with the Meritorious Achievement Award by Dr. Perry W. Ward, president of Lawson State Community College, in recognition of the work offered to Lawson State and the community. Dr. DeLucas is now principal scientist at the Aerospace Corporation and an adjunct instructor at Lawson State.

Graduates Jordan Watkins and Karl Pruitt, II offered the Class of 2017 Presentation to Dr. Ward. As has become custom, a brick paver was given symbolizing the past, present and future of the College.

Dr. Ward thanked the two outstanding students, who finished academically at the top of the class, for their message and gift to the college. He also noted that any of the graduates could be on stage telling about their fantastic experiences and what Lawson State has meant to them. “Today is just like a like a rocket ship,” he said. “We have over 500 students getting ready to launch into the universe and indeed, they will change the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

Dr. Bruce Crawford, vice president for Instructional Services, presented the candidates for graduation to President Ward. Degrees and certificates were then conferred to graduates in attendance who had completed requirements for the Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science and Associate in Occupational Technology Degrees and Certificates.