CALEXICO - For graduate Holly Chase, her 4-year-old son Aidean was the driving force behind her decision to earn her college degree despite several challenges during her college career.

“When I had him, that was it,” Chase said as her voice choked up and tears welled in her eyes. “That’s what pushed me to get my degree. I want to provide him with a better future.”

Chase, 23, had her son Aidean at 19 and gave birth to her daughter Gyllianne in March.

“In fall, I took the daunting task of being pregnant and taking 19 units,” she said.

However, she was determined to earn her degree in hopes of a promising future for her children.

Chase, of El Centro, faced a series of setbacks during her studies. She was hospitalized for a month because of severe migraines, which injured one of her eyes.

“I was going to class literally with just one eye trying to read,” she said.

Friends and her partner, Armando Garcia, would read passages aloud to her and type as she dictated her papers aloud. She said her family and friends were vital to her success.

“I don't think I’d be able to get my degree without the support of my family,” she said.

After two years at Imperial Valley College and another two years at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus, she graduated in cap and gown Thursday along with the rest of the class of 2010.

It was the campus's 50th-anniversary commencement. SDSU-IV Dean Stephen Roeder participated in his last commencement and congratulated students on their accomplishments. Roeder received a plaque for his retirement.

“This is an important milestone and a proud day for our graduates, as they complete this phase of their education,” Roeder said. “We wish to express our sincere admiration to all of our graduates for their accomplishments. This is the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance for every one of our graduates.”

Ricardo Valenzuela, president of the Associated Student Council, echoed the thoughts of many graduates as he reflected on the years of enjoyment and hard work at the university.

“This is where I grew for four years, this is where I came, this is where I learned, this is where I became who I am now, and I don’t know about you guys, but I really love this campus,” Valenzuela said.

SDSU President Stephen Weber spoke at the event, as did California State University trustee Melinda...
The class of 2010 also featured the first graduating class of computer science majors.

As strains of “Pomp and Circumstance” echoed through the quad, the graduates came in their traditional cap and gown to flashing cameras and waves of friends and relatives.

They were called one by one and by name to the podium to receive their degrees.

For Chase, who dropped out of high school as a junior, the cap and gown were a novelty, but she hopes it will not be her last time wearing them.

She will attend the SDSU-IV teaching program and is considering applying to the University of Southern California business program. She said USC sent her program information and invited her to apply.

“I prefer to teach high school, which is ironic because I didn’t finish high school,” she said.

Chase said graduation is an important first in her life.

“I didn’t get to walk for my high school graduation, but I walk for college,” she said.

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