

I chose to come to Xavier because it was my dream school and I fell in love with the community and the campus. The moment I knew Xavier was the place for me was during my campus tour senior year of high school when I walked into Bellarmine with my dad and I immediately saw the pride flag hanging in the lobby area. I knew I finally found a place that would accept me for who I am. My most impactful experience throughout my 4 years here has been being part of Manresa. Specifically doing the real world xavier talk. Being able to share my struggles with the incoming class has helped me to accept my own story while also showing others that it's ok to not be ok.

The first time I did real world I didn't use my own story but told one that I could relate to about anxiety. This was the first time ever speaking in front of so many people about things I have felt in my life. I was nervous, but it felt good to finally say some of those things out loud. The second time around, I decided to go all in and write my own story. That added a whole new level of vulnerability. It was honestly pretty scary—trying to find the courage to put something so personal out there and actually share it with a room full of people.

But what stuck with me the most was what happened after. I had multiple first-years and even people from the orientation team come up to me and say how much they connected with what I shared. Some told me they were feeling the same things and that hearing my story made them feel less alone. That moment really showed me the power of being open and real.

This third and final time doing Real World felt completely different from the first two. After going through those earlier experiences, I've grown so much. I've become more confident in who I am and proud of the journey I've been on, even the hard parts. Sharing my story this time didn't feel as scary—it felt right. Like I was finally owning everything I've been through, and instead of being nervous, I felt empowered. It's been one of the most meaningful parts of my time here.

The end of my real world speech said “Today, my journey continues. I have learned so much about me and how through my struggle and willingness to talk about it, others too can be helped. I hope to one day feel again how that little girl in second grade felt when she was nicknamed “Giggles,” but I also know that when I do, a new Giggles will emerge: One that has the knowledge and appreciation of knowing that from time to time, “it’s okay not to be okay” and that I don’t have to hide behind my mask. While having depression is a part of my experience, it does not define me. While I used to let fear and sadness define who I am now I define myself by who I want to be and who I am becoming.

I can proudly say now that a new Giggles has emerged

One thing I’ve really learned during my time at Xavier is to just keep going, no matter what. There were definitely some tough days—whether it was the stress from classes, feeling overwhelmed, or even dealing with friendship drama. But pushing through all of that really paid off. The good days—the laughs, the wins, the people who stuck by me—made it all worth it. Looking back, I’m glad I didn’t give up when things got hard, because those challenges helped me grow and made the good times feel even better. Xavier has definitely taught me a lot, but if I had to pick one lesson that stands out, it’s this: don’t give up. Even when it’s hard, even when things don’t go as planned—keep going. Because the good stuff is often just on the other side of the struggle, and it’s so worth it when you get there.