

Hi everyone, my name is Erin Rivard, and—perhaps surprisingly—I am a senior, soon to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences.

Four years ago, I had no idea that I would be choosing Xavier. And for those of you that are familiar, the date for choosing is quickly approaching. Yet here I stand today, closing a chapter in the book of my life. As I reflect on my time here, I am overwhelmed with joy and incredibly grateful for every experience and every encounter that I have had at Xavier.

Xavier has been more than an education; it has been a place where I discovered what it means to be fully myself, to be fully Erin Rivard.

My story at Xavier began with an incredibly difficult transition. I wasn't sure I could stay this far from home. That deep struggle—the feeling of being lost—ultimately led me to become a Manresa leader, a role that provided me a platform to guide first-year students through their own challenges, from homesickness to uncertainty about belonging.

The following year, I went to London for a semester, which revealed the importance of intentional community, showing me that meaningful connections are essential to my well-being.

In Theo 422 this spring, I traveled to El Salvador over spring break, where, through solidarity, I learned that the intersection of joy and suffering does in fact, coexist in our daily lives. One emotion does not have to overshadow an entire chapter; rather, they weave together to shape our experience.

Manresa, London, and El Salvador have all prepared me for my next vocation—serving as a Jesuit Volunteer in Juneau, Alaska and later as a Physician's Assistant (PA). In Alaska, I will work with a company called Southeast Alaska Independent Living, or SAIL, whose focus is positively supporting individuals in transitioning to more independence in their lives. I will also be leading the Outdoor Adaptive Recreation program. As I embark on this journey, I carry with me the lessons I've learned: the significance of transition periods, the necessity of community, and the beautiful intersection of joy and sorrow.

Thank you, Sophie, for creating a reflective and empowering space where I have been reminded that everything I've learned in this chapter will continue with me.

Thank you to Dr. Mills, Beth, Aleya, and Sam for being important parts of my story, helping me maintain an open mind and a positive outlook.

My book is filled with chapters, and many more await. Beyond this next year, I don't yet know what I will write—but I do know I have my favorite pen, my blank pages, and all the tools I need to begin.