

Arrupe Leaders Legacy Speech

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### Legacy Speech

I originally wrote this speech to share at commencement, but I wasn't chosen to share, which I first viewed as a failure. Now I see it as a redirection and a moment for growth similar to other moments where I feel like I have failed. I was given a chance to reflect and now I can use my initial reflection to further my thoughts and understand more greatly what my time at Xavier has meant to me and how it has impacted me. In the poem "Fall in Love" it closes with the lines, "What breaks your heart and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything." These lines resonate to my time at Xavier and how moments of heartbreak and moments of joy define the directions you choose, and when you are in those moments, you aren't aware just how much they mean.

From the day I stepped foot on campus, my life changed but not like in teen coming-of-age clichés. The day I toured campus was also the same day that my dad experienced his first stroke. It was on the drive home after my campus tour, and it was just the two of us in the car two hours away from home. One minute he was singing and the next his words started to slur. Despite that, my dad safely moved us to the median of a six-lane interstate as I called 9-1-1; neither of us aware of what was happening. I am sure most of you can relate to moments in life that are unexpected and the fear that coincides them. My dad recovered well and is here today, and every time we drive on that interstate, we text "prayers up" to each other as a reminder of the good and the road I took to Xavier; one that certainly came with bumps.

Though some questioned why I still chose Xavier after a traumatic experience, I felt confident that I had found my college. However, after first semester, I had doubts. I struggled finding my people and who I was away from home. I experienced failure in friendships, and I had realized I had failed myself in many ways. I gave up what I valued to please others and, in the process, lost my footing. My plan was to attend spring semester and, in the fall, start somewhere new. After spending time with myself and finding what amazes me with joy and gratitude, I felt confident in staying right where I was and that I was in the right place after all. I am now in a place where I want to do anything but leave.

College, as I am sure for most of you, was the first time I learned to live independently and discovered a lot about myself. During my first spring semester, two travel opportunities pushed me outside of my comfort zone, helped me find belonging, and I knew I had to stay. I traveled to New York City for the Big East Tournament and studied abroad in Italy that summer. Both trips I signed up knowing no one else going but knew it was something I wanted to do. I discovered how capable I was and found connections to lifelong friends who have already made a large impact on me. From day one, the Xavier community has felt more than welcoming and while it took me a semester or two to find a place to belong, I have experienced support and love like no other.

Academically, Xavier threw a lot of new experiences my way. Coming from a public high school, I had never taken a theology or philosophy class and hadn't grown up around the Jesuit faith. After my time here, I can say that these moments of learning about things outside myself were some of my favorite parts. I have found value within a Jesuit education and what it means to live out those values. This past semester, I only took major courses and through this, I found

that discussing with others in various disciplines was something I missed; the dialogue created a community of diverse voices and opened my eyes to more.

As we get ready to say goodbye to our time at Xavier, I leave you with these final thoughts: moments of independence, challenges, and changes, put us in the right spot. They let us grow and learn about ourselves, they connect us to our forever people, and they impact us in ways that we didn't see coming. Those moments of heartbreak and joy that lead us to what we love really do decide everything. While change is scary and leaves a lot of questions of the unknown, it provides moments for growth and resilience. As we transition to these next steps of our lives, the road may be bumpy, but I share with you the goodness of "prayers up" and hope in the road ahead.