

I grew up in Cincinnati and went to St. X High School. Having four years of Jesuit education allowed me to have a greater appreciation for their well-rounded education model. And while I may complain about taking biology or physics, I understand the benefit that can be found in having a well-rounded education. After all, **education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world (Nelson Mandela)**. Understanding this, I thought of Xavier as my number one option for college. I love the world of academia, and, to me, Xavier is one of those places that allows people to develop the skills they need to make their dreams come true. That is such a powerful thing to be able to do, because **the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams (Eleanor Roosevelt)**, those who are willing to put in the effort and believe in whatever their goal is. **Believe (Ted Lasso)**. That is the hardest part, just believing in your dreams. That is so crucial because it is the starting point. You need to **believe you can and you're halfway there (Theodore Roosevelt)**. Xavier is that place for me. A place to believe and get me to the starting line.

One of the biggest projects I have been grateful to have worked on during my time here is a first-year retreat that I have written and directed. In the Smith Center, specifically the Smith Scholars, there is a cohort of about 30 students a year. These students will take classes and go on

study abroad trips together for the next four years. And the biggest complaint we had from the few groups that graduated before me, is that they didn't get to know their cohort well enough until the Paris trip the summer before senior year. This led them to feel like they missed out on a bunch of time with each other because they never got the chance to get to know them. I was asked what I would like to see changed in the program so I mentioned the retreat, and was told they would consider creating something, and I knew nothing would come of that. So, I had to raise my hand and offer to do it because **opportunities don't happen, you create them (Chris Grosser)**. So, I got to work at the very painstaking and bureaucratic process of writing a retreat almost from scratch. But this would lead to me feel the pressure of trying to get everything done by deadlines, some of which were impossible, and having to navigate those issues, thanks Dustin for your flexibility by the way. But I couldn't help but find myself staring at the calendar as the days ticked away and all I could tell myself was **not to watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going (Sam Levenson)**. And as I progressed, I just dedicated myself to it more and more because I was not concerned about the pace I was going, I had the summer to hash out a lot of the actual content, I just had to keep going because it **does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop (Confucius)**. Little by little I was amassing the content and materials

needed to run a retreat for 30 people. I had managed to navigate the chaos and do what needed to be done. I started **by doing what's necessary, then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible (Francis of Assisi)** because with a task that daunting **it always seems impossible until it's done (Nelson Mandela).**

However, it would not be that easy of a task. Once the donors learned the retreat they were spending \$5,000 on was being written and directed by a rising sophomore, they were reasonably concerned that it would not end well. That did not mean I was not hurt by it but **the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any (Alice Walker).** So I buckled down and let them have 2 hours to bring in a guest and take guess as to how that went. Terrible as you would assume. We brought in a group to talk about how to have tough conversations and it led to some mildly offensive conversations that I had to put a stop to and move on with the day. I was hung to dry and had to try and recapture the feeling of the retreat and attempt to recenter the group. And I could only tell myself to **do what you can, with what you have, where you are (Theodore Roosevelt).** At the end of it all, I was able to have the students fill out some feedback and the results could not have been better. I was also able to

tell our donors that they loved everything I wrote and hated what the group presented on so that was a huge upside.

Through this, I gained an appreciation for something I did not realize I liked. I really enjoy to teach and lead others. This was not something I had considered as a career path before then. I had been trying to figure out the bureaucracy, titles, and designs of the retreat but **leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another (John Maxwell)**. So where does that leave me? It leaves me wanting to stay in academia. Now, that would require me to eventually get a doctorate, partially for myself, and to be able to really teach but I am taking the first step by pursuing my masters next year. But I cannot start right away, I need to work in the public sector for a bit to make money and become stable before I start taking a risk towards what I really want to do. That being said, I will continue to do what I always do. **I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have (Thomas Jefferson)**. And this luck has helped me knock it out of the park a few times because I keep myself super busy and **success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it (Henry David Thoreau)**. In the end, I know that I will never get things to be exactly how I want them but is that not what makes our world the best. **Nothing's perfect, the world's not**

**perfect, but it's there for us, trying the best it can. That's what makes it so beautiful**

**(FMAB).** So I will leave you with something that you probably hear all the time, but **go forth**

**and set the world on fire (St. Ignatius Loyola),** because it is a truly beautiful site to see.