

President Scott, Provost Perruci, Board of Trustees, esteemed faculty and administration, family and friends, and most importantly, the Marietta College class of 2012.

I am honored to stand before my peers today. I'm here to talk about College. It passed by in the blink of an eye. I'm sure everyone here today can remember 2008 like it was yesterday. Just a simple blink, and it's all over. Today, we receive our diplomas, and walk out of the Dyson-Baudo Recreation Center as Marietta College graduates. But exactly how long did it take us to blink?

Studies show that it takes 300 milliseconds to blink. Since there are 1,000 milliseconds in each second, the blink of an eye takes about 1/3 of a second.

Compared to the time span of one full second, a blink of an eye seems like an eternity. Thirty-three percent of that second is given over to blindness, to apprehension, to an unknown future.

We didn't just blink once and make it through college. There were plenty of times when our future was unknown, when we weren't sure if we were making the right decision, and when we completely shut ourselves off and let our blindness lead us.

But that's how we got to Marietta College in the first place. None of us knew if we were making the right decision. We blinked, and high school was over. The next step was to go to college, but how were you supposed to know if Marietta was going to be the right choice? That decision was full of blinks; of blindness, apprehension, and walking an unknown path to an unknown future.

For me, my blink was pretty easy. Marietta was actually the only school that I applied to. Once I visited campus, took a tour, and interacted with scholarly upperclassmen, I immediately knew that I wanted to spend my collegiate career at Marietta College.

Now that I knew where I was going, it was time to start filling out about five scholarship applications a day, to try and afford it. All of the applications asked what I wanted to be after graduating college. I stopped and blinked. I felt uneasy answering with "I have no idea whatsoever", so I put "a Dentist". Looking back, I completely let my blindness lead me, even if it was only for one-third of a second. I had only one reason for wanting to be a dentist. I wanted a huge fish tank in my office, complete with every fish that had a starring role in Finding Nemo. And that was my goal.

I thought I would eventually start to understand what was going on in my science classes, but I didn't. I definitely didn't have a passion for my Biochemistry major. Or

the Biology major that I switched to. Or the Health Science major that I switched to after that. I blinked, and was quickly back at square one.

At this point, changing my major was out of the question. What would I even change it to? Would I have to transfer? Is it too soon to make this decision?

One day, I was on my way to class and saw a poster advertising an information session with Dr. Mabry O'Donnell about the Forensics Team. I had been really interested in Forensics for a long time before coming to college, and thought maybe I found that passion I was searching for! I went to Dr. O's office and had about a 45-minute conversation with her before I realized that "Forensics" was NOT "Crime Scene Investigation".

That was the final straw. I was tired of blinking, tired of the blank stares, tired of the blindness. I knew at this point that I needed to switch my major, before it was too late.

So then came the hard part; telling my parents. How do I tell them that I wanted to change my major? Everything they had planned for me was out of the picture. No dental school, no science classes, no fish tank. Before my parents would let me make the switch, my dad said something to me that has resonated ever since.

"Ryan", he said, "you need to pick something that will make you stand out, that will make you marketable."

At that point, I finally "got it". I opened my eyes and saw all of the opportunities that a Marketing degree could give me. I stopped letting my blindness lead me, and I led myself, all the way up to this stage today, complete with a new major, new career goals, and a new path to build for myself.

We all blink for different reasons. Some of us blink rapidly at someone to be a little flirtatious, and to try not to come off as creepy. In class, others blink with a blank stare, signifying that we have no idea what's going on. Whatever the reason, don't let your blinks control your destiny. Don't succumb to the blindness. It already happened once; we blinked, and college ends today. Now's your chance to start fresh, to pave new paths, and see the world in a different viewpoint. Don't blink; the upcoming road is too important to let it pass by in the blink of an eye.

Happy Mother's Day Mom. Thank you.