

By the Numbers': The Impact of the Class of 2015

During the course of our time here, many of us learned that numbers have a story to tell. Most of us have a Social Security Number, we all have a student ID number, and we've spent the past four years obsessing over our GPAs and how many credit hours separate us, from graduation. Now I will admit, I've been scared of numbers since someone told me that seven ate nine. I understand that ten is next. So I declared a political science major. By the time the second semester of my sophomore year came around, I realized my error; political science is a fancy way of saying statistics. This error was compounded by my decision to declare an economics major during the previous semester. However, seeing as I was already halfway through my college career, the logical thing to do seemed to be to make peace with numbers, and to use them to describe phenomena wherever possible.

As an economist, one of the terms I frequently encounter is "return on investment." Many parents also commonly consider this term, including my own. My folks will tell you a lot of stories about me if you ask them, including all of my brilliant ideas that they sometimes consider (ahem) misguided. It was after I presented one of these ideas to them over winter break that they asked me, "why are we sending you to school?" I imagine many other parents here today have either asked their sons or daughters this question, or have wanted to at least once. So allow me to explain the return on investment for a Marietta College Education.

In order for us to understand the return on investment, we must consider the cost of our attendance at Marietta College. For the Class of 2015, an average student would have paid \$80,000, after allowing for financial assistance, over the course of their four years. While this is certainly an appreciable sum, this number is offset by the return. Over the past four years, the Class of 2015 has completed about 5200 hours of community service and has raised \$150,000

for charitable organizations and causes across the country. We've traveled a total of 1.7 million miles to 21 States in the Union and each of the world's populated continents. We've founded 3 clubs and student organizations and we've held the presidencies or been the captains of 46 of these organizations. We've performed 105 concerts, and have helped to organize and run 12 major conferences. Let me assure you we've participated in several more of such conferences off campus. We've also had a tremendous impact on the local economy, spending \$40,000 per year on bee---I mean, school supplies. And we've done all of this while maintaining a 3.2 average GPA.

While the above numbers help to quantify all that we've done over the last four years, they alone cannot explain the impact that the Class of 2015 has had. Our sports teams have competed and found success in several NCAA tournaments. We've created incredible works of art composed of a variety of media such as photographs, canvas, and ceramics. We've forged incredible friendships and met people whom we hold very dear. But while we've learned many happy lessons, we've also been forced to reconcile with life's hardships. We've seen faculty and staff members be laid off. And we've had to mourn for lives taken far before it should have been their time. These memories are not easy to consider. And some may even say that they are not befitting of a commencement address. But to deny them would be to deny some of the most fundamental lessons Marietta has offered to us. Grappling with these losses has motivated our class and the classes after us to continue to work each and every day to honor the memories of those who gave so much of themselves to make this campus a better place. As we leave here and join the long blue line, may we take our memories of these individuals with us, so that they may inspire us to create positive change wherever we may go.

Parents of the Class of 2015, I hope I've convinced you that your investment was well worth it. And to my own parents, I just wish to say thank you, not just because you wrote a

check every semester, but because you gave me the love, support, and trust to learn as much as I could while I was here.

Class of 2015. Some of you may remember Dr. Perruci's matriculation address to us, where he detailed all of the challenges our generation faces. Four years ago, many of these challenges seemed insurmountable. Today, they still seem daunting. But today, I know just how much we can achieve when we work together. And I therefore have no doubt in my mind that our class and our generation will rise to the occasion and address these challenges. I don't doubt this because I've already seen it happen. So as we begin to establish lives in various parts of the country, or perhaps abroad, I encourage you to use the tools you've learned here to improve your surroundings. And I encourage you to reach out to your roommates, your friends, and your mentors periodically. We've spent the last four years looking out for each other. We'll need to spend the rest of our lives doing the same if we are to achieve all that we must. While today feels like an end, I assure you, it is only a beginning. It is the beginning of what I know in my heart, will be a bright, and prosperous future for each and every one of you. Congratulations, to the Class of 2015, and may God bless each and every one of you as you continue on life's journey.

