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Jewett Speech Competition
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“Embrace the Fear”

President Ruud, Provost Bland, staff, faculty, friends, family, welcome to this celebration of one of the greatest graduating classes in the history of Marietta College. The class of 2020. We sure have come a long way in what seems like a very short four years.

From our first orientations to the strawberries and cream ceremony and all of the events in between. From playing cornhole and riding in the hot air balloon at Doo-dah day to cheering as loud as we could at football games, de-stressing with dogs on the mall, and packing Ban Johnson arena on Wednesday nights and Saturday afternoons. These were my favorite experiences. They made Marietta truly feel like home.

These experiences shaped us all and brought us together as a family. A family that I’ve loved to be a part of every step of the way, and speaking of memorable experiences, or in this case maybe a not so memorable experience, I’d like to start at the very beginning with a story.

Almost four years ago I made one of my many trips to Marietta, Ohio with my parents the night before my first-year orientation. I found myself excited and also a tad bit nervous, which I assumed everybody else probably felt at the time. However, the following morning was a much different story because, as I will now easily admit, I was absolutely terrified. I wanted no part of orientation or school.

For the first time in 18 years I was going to get my first taste of a brand new beginning away from everything I’d ever known. That morning of orientation, I was so petrified and was so overcome with fear that I refused to leave our hotel room. I went back and forth talking with my parents, wanting to leave and go home. I guess I really failed to realize that this was the last thing they wanted to deal with at 7 o’clock on a Friday morning, especially after I told them how excited I was to come here.

However, after about 10 minutes I thought to myself, “maybe I should just embrace this fear apprehension, embrace this new opportunity and try to make something special out of it”. Well, I took one step out of that hotel room and the rest was history.

Four years later and here we are. Here we are on the verge of brand new beginnings once again, which is slightly scary to think about. Whether you majored in communications, petroleum engineering, art, biochemistry, or anything in between, we’ve all felt the stress and fear of classes. The fear of an organic chemistry exam, getting an art project done on time, or completing research for capstone. All of this on top of trying to be social and spend time with you best friends at finals breakfast, at a sporting event, or hanging out in hammocks at the pergola on the Harrison lawn.

But here's the kicker, think about all those times when you were stressed, worried, and afraid of doing poorly on your assignments and realize all of the knowledge you gained and the skills you developed. Some of us learned how to paint, others learned how to give great presentations, and some drew and memorized amino acids and metabolic pathways more times than we care to remember.

Also think about all of the great experiences you had with your best friends and peers. It's really astonishing. We embraced our fears and made the most out of every opportunity without really thinking about it. We made the most of our academic and social opportunities, and it has led us all here to this very moment.

Embracing our fears

That is what makes this class special.

That is what gives this class the ability to leave here today and make the world a better place than it was we found it.

That is what will make this class special for the rest of time.

We embrace our fears which allows us to gain control of them, to master them and not let them control us.

When we do this, there is nothing we can't accomplish.

There is nothing we can't overcome.

As we all go our separate ways today, we really don't know what's going to happen next, but don't let fear or apprehension from not knowing dictate what your life will be like going forward. Embrace and control your fears. Master them and make the most of the opportunities you're given. Combine this with the life experiences and knowledge from the world class education you've received the last four years, and you may very well change the world.

Finally, I'd like to end with a quote from Gilda Radner.

"Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best out of it, without knowing what's going to happen next".

To the class of 2020, congratulations and thank you for making the last four years truly unforgettable.