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Welcome Class of 2014, Marietta College faculty, Staff, family, and friends.

“What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail.” Ellen Campbell asked me this question my sophomore year in orientation leader training. It has always stuck with me along with her amazing laughter. This quote came to mind this year when someone asked me if I would participate in the Jewett speech competition. At first I said no and made excuses like, I don’t have time but, as I began to think more about it, I realized I was just afraid. Then another thought came across my mind, “how many opportunities have we missed because of fear?”

During my time here at Marietta College I have learned 3 valuable lessons that will forever change my life. Fear, regret, and the “What if” moments of life can help me be successful. We have all experienced all of these sensations at some point in our life and will continue to experience them in the future but, we rarely credit them for our accomplishments. So, today let’s spend some time examining the importance of fear, regret, and uncertainty.

First, we all remember our freshman year and the anxiety and fear of being in a new place with new people. Many of us cautiously walked through our freshman year hoping to find a friend or a group to belong to. After a week at Marietta we probably all had more friends than we ever anticipated. We also learned that Marietta College makes it very difficult to not find friends or belong to a community. Once we found our set of friends or place to call our own that anxiety of acceptance slowly faded away. During my time at Marietta I have learned that fear is inevitable in life. Fear is usually associated with an uncertainty of the circumstances, of others, and of ourselves. But, we can actually use our fears to fuel us toward success. Take a moment to think about how many times you have let fear keep you from trying something new?

Personally, fear has kept me from many college experiences. For example, I stayed away from Gilman Dining Hall my freshman year after hearing stories about the Gilman plague the year before. Fear had definitely left me hungry a few nights that year. I must not have been the only one the feared the food here because students and faculty partnered together to finally change the dining service which I am

definitely grateful for. We all used that fear to fuel our success. From this experience I learned that fear will always be there throughout our lives. Many of us today have fear within us even now. Fear of the next step. Fear of having a new job. Fear of not having a job. Fear of graduate programs. Fear of going home to live with your parents. Fortunately, we all decided to attend an institution that recognized our uneasiness about life and provided resources that help us push past our insecurities. Much like the anxiety we had our freshman year that was resolved when we made friends, Marietta accepted us and created a community of scholars, trailblazers, and pioneers that we can freely belong to. I don't know about you but, knowing that I belong to the powerful long blue line eases my fear about the future.

Second, regret, much like fear, has been a vital part of my college experience. Usually when we ask someone if they have any regrets they typically say no. For me, that is not true. I regret 100% of the things I didn't try because I was afraid. For example, Marietta College has worked hard to allow its students the ability to study abroad. I regret not taking the opportunity to explore another culture in another country. Due to fear, I did not take the many opportunities afforded to me to expand my mind and understanding. But, the blessing in disguise here is that we attended a school that taught us that we may have many regrets in life but, we must turn our regrets into encouragement for ourselves and others. I did not study abroad but, I can encourage those around me to do what I was too afraid to do. Think about your college regrets and think about how you can use those regrets to influence, encourage, and energize the next generation of pioneers.

Lastly, the "what ifs" of life are constantly around us. Even now, I'm thinking "what if" I trip getting off stage, hit my face, and totally mess up my makeup. That would definitely make graduation a more memorable moment. But, let's think about our last 4 years of life and the everyday what ifs that may or may not have encouraged or discouraged us from accomplishing a goal.

Due to amazing technology, doctors have found out that the average person's brain produces as many as 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts per day. The shocking part is that 70-80% of those thoughts are negative. Now, this is interesting to me because as we focus on the "what if" moments, how many of those are typically negative? "What if I try out and I don't make the team?" "What if I apply and I don't get accepted?" "What if I move back home and my parents want me to do chores?" These are all negative thoughts we have had or will have in life. But, the amazing thing is that we have the option to make those "what ifs" of life a positive question. The brain processes 50,000 thoughts daily and we have the power to make them

positive. For example, “what if I go into the interview using all of the tools the career center taught me and I actually get the job?” “What if I try and actually succeed?” “What if I used my fears and regret to benefit myself and others?”

As I come to a close, I want you to remember one of the greatest gifts Marietta has given us. The gift of knowledge on how to use our fears, regrets, and uncertainty to fuel our success is a powerful thing that will forever help us throughout our lives. The moment we began to use these 3 components to our advantage, we will be unstoppable. In the beginning, I asked “What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail”. I challenge you today. As you get ready to go on to the next stage of life where ever that may be for you, think about not just what you would do if you couldn’t fail but, what will you do despite your failures, your fears, and your regret. Marietta taught me that life isn’t about having everything work perfectly without flaws but, to use those shortcomings to better myself and someone else. Learning to persevere despite our fear is what makes us all pioneers

Thank you.