

Adversity is an untapped Strength.

Terry Gasper

As I stand before you today, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished visitors, educators, and the amazing Class of 2024, I am overcome with gratitude and nostalgia. Graduation is a result of years of perseverance, hard work, and drive rather than just a moment to celebrate. It has been an honor to share a small portion of my incredible adventure with you all as my twin brother Perry and I navigate this amazing Institution.

Our college journey started more than three years ago, during a time when the globe was attempting to deal with the effects of a pandemic. We experienced anxiety and uncertainty, just like many of you, but we bravely decided to set out on this adventure despite the challenges. With the backing of our devoted parents and the direction of our instructors, we suddenly found ourselves in a foreign yet friendly nation thousands of miles away from home. The first semester tested our participants' patience and flexibility virtually from Ghana. We battled homesickness, adjusted to time zone variations, and accepted that we were foreigners living in our own nation. But we persisted despite everything. We virtually linked with peers, attended Zoom classes, and gradually but steadily established ourselves in this unfamiliar academic environment.

However, it wasn't until the 2021 spring semester that the real meaning of college life started to emerge. We discovered the value of starting even when the road appeared difficult despite the difficulties. We overcame hardship head-on, asked for help when we needed it, and came out stronger and more determined than before. Another set of difficulties came with internships, but we weren't going to let failure stop us. Rejections became learning experiences, and we accepted

every encounter, whether it fit into our original intentions. All of it taught us the priceless lesson of resilience, which is the capacity to change, grow, and prosper in the face of difficulty.

The journey was equally enriching socially. Diversity gave us comfort, allowing us to overcome cultural divides and create ties that cut across boundaries. Yes, there were difficult times due to cultural and dialect hurdles, but each obstacle simply strengthened our will to find our place in this active society. The Barbara Diggs Lyles House is one memory that I will always cherish.

Not only was it a structure; for us foreign students, it was a refuge, a safe place where we could feel like we belonged. The Barbara Diggs Lyles House became our home away from home, a place where differences were celebrated and friendships blossomed, from late-night study sessions to spontaneous cooking events. Tony Mayle, the director of diversity and inclusion, has our sincere gratitude. My gratitude fills this hall, as a village of friends and friends who became family helped me navigate college rather than a single person.

Glancing out at the Class of 2024, I see a group of people full of potential, eager to set off on their own special journeys. Simple yet profound is my message to you: never lose sight of your dreams, embrace the moments, and accept the trials. Though there will be challenges on the way, keep in mind that it's not about the destination; rather, it's about the voyage, the insights gained, and the individuals impacted en route.

Thus, let us enter the unknown void of the future with courage, resiliency, and a steadfast conviction in ourselves as we say goodbye to this chapter of our lives. "Sometimes you don't realize your own strength until you come face to face with your greatest weakness." – Susan Gale
Congratulations, Class of 2024 – the world awaits, and I have no doubt that you will conquer it with grace, with passion, and with the indomitable spirit of a Marietta Pioneer.

Thank you.