

Jewett Speech: The Final Draft  
By: Jaclyn Mulvain '21

My biggest passion in life is public speaking, and from my freshmen year when I heard the Jewett speaker at graduation I knew I wanted to be able to stand up in front of the class of 2021 and give a sappy heartfelt speech that reflected on this crazy ride we call college. I've rewritten this speech three times since then, and each time I sat down to rewrite it was because I had a come to Jesus moment and would undergo a powerful experience that has come to shape me into the woman standing in front of you today. In this, my final draft, I can't promise that this speech will be sappy. For those who know me, also know I can't promise I'll make it through without shedding a tear. I can promise you though this speech will not be as bad as being told to wear goggles to class on a freezing day instead of just canceling. Through this speech my hope is for the class of 2021 that you can reflect back on your own memories and can relate to one or more of these lessons that I have learned myself.

I played softball for 15 years of my life, and even though I took math three times at Marietta College, my trusted calculator told me that 15 years was 71% of my life. I was in shock, I mean think about that, 71% of my life dedicated to the sport of softball. Through countless hours of practices, games, literal blood, sweat, tears and yes, even once poop... I've learned a few lessons in that time: like always bring extra shorts to practice. More seriously, the sport of softball has taught me patience, hard work, team work, but most importantly it taught me to have faith in myself. That, for me, was lesson #1 in college.

I feel like a lot of people in this room can relate to me when I say as a freshman athlete you come into school eager like a puppy. All you want is be the absolute best you can, play hard for your team, and show off the talent you have worked so tirelessly for. I was no different, I wanted to get out onto that field and show the world what Jackie Mulvain was made of, and I was given that opportunity. Jeanne Arbuckle, who is sort of like a legend around this campus, was my coach freshmen year. Let me set the scene for you: It's our annual spring break trip to Kissimmee, FL. It's the first day of play at 8am, the sun is shining, I am dead to the world. While I'm asleep on a bucket of balls, Coach Arbuckle comes over to me kicks my foot startling me and says "wake up Jack let's go you're starting this game." That game I pitched 1 inning and the other team scored 5 runs and we ended up losing. I was so disappointed in myself because I knew I could have done better, and in the back of my head I knew I ruined my one chance to show my talent and as a result I would never see the mound again.

Don't worry this story does have a happy ending. Unbeknownst to me, I would see the mound again that very same day. Coach comes over to me puts the game ball in my hand tells me to get warmed up and before I can object she walks away. I'm left standing there looking at the ball and our assistant coach, Brianna Finick, comes over to me and says "What's on your mind?" I said "I don't want to screw this up again." Then she said the three words I will never forget, she said "I trust you." She followed this up with, "you need to trust yourself" and walked away. I'm not sure if she remembers that conversation, but it's been 4 years and I have never forgotten a single word. Every time I doubt myself in a class, in making a life decision, in

anything I do, I think back to those words and it keeps me grounded and reminds me to have faith in myself.

While it's vital to be able to trust ourselves and our decisions, I think every person graduating here today can agree with me when I say there is no way we would have survived college, and I mean that literally and figuratively without the people we had by our sides. For some of us lesson #2 was learned the easy way and for some of us, like myself, lesson #2 was learned the hard way.

My junior year I was asked to attend a conference as a representative to accept an award for an organization on campus. Everything was going well until I ate the chicken salad from the buffet. As I'm standing up with my peer and my advisor in a room full of a 100 people, I felt a rumble in my stomach. I pushed the urging cramping aside and continued to smile for pictures. As we got back to our table, I calmly walked to the bathroom and pulled my hair up because I know what's about to come. I didn't even make it all the way through the stall door before I was staring back at that chicken salad I had on my plate just 20 minutes prior. If that wasn't bad enough on the way back to the hotel my former advisor and now friend, Alane Sanders, had to pull the car over twice. For the next 12 hours I continued to suffer from horrible food poisoning.

Like a super hero though, Dr Sanders was there for me in full mom mode, and was constantly checking on me, pumping me full of fluids, and making sure I snacked on crackers. It was in these moments that I realized we truly are a family at Marietta College. We look out for one another, lean on each other, and care for the people we love no matter if it's your friends, your teammates, your brothers or your sisters. This is what it means to wear navy blue and white, this is what it means to be a pioneer.

I have one final lesson for you before we depart and it starts with a memory: this winter I was standing with my friends at the top of Harrison hill sledding. Waiting for our turn with tote lids, and trash bags in hand I took a minute to just breathe it all in. Somehow in the midst of COVID, depression, and burnout the people on this campus found a way to laugh and smile. I went back to my room, and I reflected on my time at Marietta and the people I met here. I would be lying if I said I didn't cry, but what I realized is this college and the memories we made here is unlike any other place we will ever know.

So, today when we begin our new journey and leave campus for the last time as students and for the first time as alumni I want you to think about this final lesson and what Marietta means to you. Please remember to stop, look around, and breathe it all in one final time and remember why you choose Marietta, why you continued to stay, and most importantly where you're going. Thank your professors, your friends, and of course your family for helping to get you across that finish line. Marietta might just be a small college along the Ohio river, but I feel confident speaking for all of here when I say it has left a big impact on our hearts and in our lives.

Thank you.