

I sat down to write this speech, and truthfully had no idea what to do. So I did what anyone would do if they got writer's block, went to Dana's, and on the walk back figured out exactly what I needed to say.

As many of you know, my Xavier journey has been unorthodox, nontraditional, random, weird, goofy, so on and so forth. But it is only on this path that I have met the people, done the things, and felt the emotions I have. Trying to sum this up is hard - truly - and there is no single lesson or memory that I can pick to encompass my time here. That being said, there may be a person.

Family, and particularly my family, has always been a big part of my identity. It is the source of my strength, my personality, my tendency to clean my room when they are visiting, and above all something I am not afraid to share. That being said, as particularly Georgia, Maggie and Garrett can attest, there is one family member above all others that has ingrained herself in my common-speak. Yes, my Memaw was a part of my Xavier journey I did not expect. "Love you memaw" has become groupchat names, points of casual conversation, and way to many conversations at karaoke. But as much as I could talk about her, I bring her up for reasons beyond her general greatness.

As I prepared for college, like most of you I was that kid who thought he had it all figured out. I thought I knew what I wanted, and more than anything I was ready to get away. Be on my own. Finally live my life. At the same time, coming out of numerous disappointments at other colleges, COVID, and a host of other struggles, I was not ready for the next chapter.

In fact, when I made the decision to come to Xavier I was not even confident. Yet it was her wisdom, her love, and a few stern talking to's that got me through even the toughest times along this path. I thought I was getting home, but really it became even more a part of me.

A few of these stick out still. So I thought I'd share.

Be thankful, but never satisfied. My Memaw is now 80, and she continues to embody the mindset of "you only get older when you slow down". Despite recommendations this never changes, but I think that applies to us more than I realized until recently. I look around this room and see a room of leaders, and each of you has done things that impress me and everyone else you know. As you go about your days to come, this is a blessing - the drive to do more. This may not necessarily be more in a job or school. Maybe its more in your relationships. Maybe its more with your family. Maybe its more of your vocation, your hobby, or your happiness. But regardless, find that more, and in that way you will never grow old. As you find your more, and as we have talked about much this semester, it is easy to find yourself feeling inadequate. Like you missed the mark, like you're falling short, like you're not where you should be. And in that moment, do what my loudmouthed self has found to be most difficult of all - Listen. Listen to those around you that care, and in those moments of struggle and doubt, believe them. Because regardless of my struggle, whether a test, a breakup, an illness, or anything in between. Well as memaw put it "unless you got a mirror there is no way you can see how great you are doing in this moment like I do". So find that mirror.

Live life uncomfortably. I started college, and my biggest fear was making friends. Looking back with the people I know and love now I realize how laughable that is, but as you all know, its scary! Going into a new place, new people, new part of life, it felt so easy to be quite, keep to myself and get through. And that was when she told me to quit thinking and talk the way I always do. Now, the second half of that felt a little unnecessary. But as I have gone through my time at Xavier, this has made all the difference. The best roles I have filled are the ones I have joined on a whim - one leap of faith without thinking. The best successes I have had connecting with others are those in which i did not let the fear of the awkward, of the weird, of the lull in the conversation stop me. TALK. That's what it boils down to. I am still that overthinker, who doubts himself in social situations and thinks about that the facts that I said thank you back to someone i was serving last week. But the joy, the love, and the life I have lived by pushing myself over the threshold to act has made all the difference. As Dr. Moore said success is dictated by your tolerance to temporary discomfort. Whether it is a new position, a new friend, or anything in between, don't let that discomfort stop you.

Lastly, possibly the most profound and biggest takeaway in all of this - quit taking crap so seriously. And yes, if you know me you may not believe that's something I had to have been told, but its true. We can look back on college and smile now but never forget those late nights, those heartbreaks, those trials and tribulations that you faced because IT WAS A STRUGGLE. But even when you found yourself in the weeds you found a way through. And when you find yourself back in them again, you will find your way through once more. Your strength and resolve is a gift, the

indomitable spirit you have been given proven by the fact you sit here today. So next time you are in the weeds. Or near Move Crew day2 levels of exhausting .Next time you find yourself stumbling, fumbling, grumbling, mumbling, lumbering, crying, trying, dying to get through. BREATHE. Look around you. Call your friend. Call your grandmother, or your mother, your brother. Whoever. And laugh.

Now, I did not just get up here to tell you all that I love my grandmother and that she says some cool things. In fact, that's the last thing I want you to think. I tell you all this, because its everything we have said over the past 4 months. Every coffee chat, every guest speaker, every side conversation, every thought about plans after graduation - every little moment has been something to appreciate deeply, to find the joy in, to push further from, to reflect upon, and to feel.

I came to Xavier, and the Jesuit values to a non-Catholic boy from Kentucky were just a video thrown up during Manresa. I had no ties, no opinions, and truly no faith in them at the time. But as I look around The Arrupe leaders program, and each of you, I realize the impact it's had. And that the values I'm rooted in, that I was raised on. Well they maybe have ha not had the name but they did make the difference. So as we close this year, breathe, feel, be happy with what you have done and ready for even more. Do what you feel called to, and jump at the fear you find. And above all, when you look at those around you, listen and see the care they feel for you - it is truly the impact you have made.

That's what memaw would say.