

## **Arrupe Leaders Celebration Legacy Talk**

Legacy. What is a legacy? What is my legacy?

For me, this contemplation started gradually, like a whisper at the back of my mind that grew louder over time.

At the beginning of my Xavier journey, I was preoccupied with the present, consumed with just trying to get by during the pandemic and find my place on this campus. But as my campus life unfolded, and restrictions were lifted, I began to plant roots on campus. I found myself involved in countless clubs, attending events, and just trying to make up for the lost time.

As I reflect on each year here at Xavier, the most impactful year was undoubtedly my sophomore year. During that time, I had the privilege of being placed on the A team for mock trial club, voted as Vice President, and given a role as a closer. For those of you unfamiliar with mock trial, that is a huge honor! As a closer and an A team participant, I was given the opportunity to lead an entire side of our case. This allowed me to have the final say in the witnesses, choose the material we focused on, and provide the final 10 minute argument at the end of trial. Throughout that year, the seniors on the team were extremely encouraging and assisted in helping me grow in mock trial and as a leader.

As the end of my Sophomore year rolled around, I sadly watched those same influential seniors graduate and ultimately leave the club in my care. The impact they had on me and my journey is something they would never fully know. Charged with a duty of continuing to carry the torch, this was the moment that I began to reflect on the kind of person I wanted to be remembered as. Many questions began forming in my mind ... Do I want to be known for my academic success? What about my professional experiences? Do I want to be known for my campus involvement? Or perhaps something deeper, something more meaningful? While I was growing and developing as a leader, I realized it's not about the accomplishments we gain; it's about the lives we touch, the hearts we uplift, and the positive change we inspire.

This realization prompted a shift in perspective. Instead of solely focusing on personal gain, I started to prioritize making a difference in the lives of others. Whether through acts of kindness or mentorship, I aimed to leave behind a legacy of compassion, empathy, and positive change. To achieve this, I cut my involvement in half. I began to spend more time cultivating friendships and relationships the same way those seniors had with me.

But sadly, my journey was not linear. In mock trial the best way to learn is by trying, failing, and getting better each time. After having the experience as the youngest on the A team my sophomore year and being surrounded by tested seniors, I had a sense of what it was like to compete against the best of the best. It's not something you can teach. You have to experience it and have guidance. During my Junior year, I found myself winning individual awards thanks to my mentorship from the prior year; however, the rest of the team didn't see the overall results they wanted and began to feel defeated. The struggle came as the team, filled with untested rising B team participants, failed to achieve the results they wanted or knew they were capable of. They didn't have the same foundation I had. I realized the mentorship I received as a Sophomore needed to be passed on to this team that was now in my care. The reduction in involvement in too many other activities from the previous years allowed me to take on the same mentorship role those pivotal and influential Seniors had on me. Finally, by the end of the season, every member felt confident and ready to tackle our hardest competition of the season. While we did see the results we wanted last year, or even this year, we grew closer as a team.

In the end, I've come to understand that legacy is not something we leave behind; it's something we live every day. It's the sum total of our actions, our choices, and the way we impact the world around us. And while it may take a lifetime to fully comprehend, the journey of self-discovery and reflection is an essential part of the process.

What is my legacy? Well Lin Manuel Miranda said it perfectly, "it's planting seeds in a garden you'll never get to see."