

Let me quickly introduce myself.

My name is Gunhee Park and I am an alum that graduated from here back in 2010 (close to 9 years ago). I came to Mount Michael as a freshman straight from South Korea, and attended all 4 years here as an international 7-day boarding student. Upon graduating from the Mount, I went to Arizona State University and afterwards lived and worked in Austin, TX before moving back to Omaha about a year and a half ago.

So that's a little bit about me.

Fr John had asked me to come by today to speak to you all about the catholic school experience. But, since you all already are here, I won't dive too much into what it's like, but rather take a moment to share some of the bigger learnings for me and pass on some reflections I've had after leaving here.

First, my biggest message is for you to cherish the friendships & relationships you're making here, as this is a truly one-of-a-kind experience. I'm not only talking about the friends you're sitting or standing next to, but also the teachers and other faculty members who'll become your mentors throughout your 4 years. Many of them will endure as lifelong friends that you'll seek out during both your toughest and happiest times. Enjoy the camaraderie and the welcoming environment that this school offers, as you'll miss this dearly when you set foot on campus at a bigger college institution.

But while you cherish the camaraderie here, know that your time here is a stepping stone that is helping you for much bigger challenges. The best way to prepare, in my opinion, is to find ways continue to challenge yourself and put yourself in uncomfortable situations. No matter what college you end up going to, know that you'll be one of hundreds, if not thousands, of students who have excelled both academically and in their extracurricular activities. Know that both in college and in starting your career, you'll be facing evermore competition, especially as the global community continues to be intertwined. My biggest advice would be for you to always stay humble and continue to find opportunities to challenge yourself.

And lastly, for the international students, I know, from first-hand experience, that things can get lonely here. Some of you (or maybe many of you) might think that Nebraska is not the most exciting place to be, and some days, you just want to go back home. But know this - the time you have here will be something special that you'll always remember later in life; and the experience you have here will be as great as you make it to be.

Know that this experience of living away from your family at such an early age will help you in various ways in life. Learning the responsibilities of taking care of yourself and your own things, even simple tasks of doing laundry every week, and being put in a position early on to make your own grown-up decisions, will go a long way in helping you later down the road.

These are all experiences that will give you a head start not only when you go to college, but also when you start your professional career.

And when things get tough, and you miss home, always remember the sacrifices your parents and family have made, and are continuing to make, to give you the opportunity to study in the United States.

In these competitive times, when so many people are dreaming of the opportunity to come to the United States, you have been given a special opportunity and it is up to you to make something of it.

But with all that, the one thing I would like to say is for you to actually enjoy your time here. Try not to put too much stress on yourselves. Coming from an Asian country myself, I know how much pressure some of you have for you to ace your exams, get a perfect 4.0, and to do as many activities as possible to build up that perfect resume. Certain amount of stress and challenges are good, and you should always do your best, but as with anything in life, strive to strike a balance to cherish your time here.

Thanks for listening and I wish you all the best of luck. For any of you students, especially international students, if you have any questions that I could help with, reach out to me anytime.