

Inspiration

I find myself sitting here, in front of my computer having no idea of how to begin this essay. It is not as though I have nothing to write, but quite the opposite actually. To try and describe the respect and gratitude I feel for Saint Mary's in words at all, let alone within 1,000 words, is difficult, but nonetheless I am going to take this opportunity and try.

The moment I put my name down as "applicant", on the application form for an undergraduate programme at Saint Mary's University, I felt connected somehow to this new community I would soon be entering. It may have been excitement, or anxiousness, or even just wishful thinking, but I identified as a Huskie immediately, and was proud to be part of this school with which, at the time, I had no experience. Whether that feeling of connection had been superficial or imagined initially, it was without a doubt emphatically validated the first time I walked onto SMU's campus, and everyday thereafter. From the administration, to my fellow students, to the professors who taught me, among the innumerable differences between all us, there was a great leveler. We belonged to Saint Mary's, and it belonged to us. From that moment on, it seemed, an entire university was behind me and not only wanted, but worked, for me to succeed.

The professors from whom I had the privilege of learning deserve a special credit. Perhaps without knowing, or perhaps with knowing, they inspired me in a way for which I do not think words could ever fully describe. The enthusiasm my professors had for their field emanated

from them during every lecture, and I appreciated the way they tried (and in most cases, succeeded) to get their students to be just as enthusiastic. Saint Mary's professors I have encountered during my time here are people who went above and beyond and fed a thirst for knowledge. They taught us the curriculum, of course, but much more in the process. It fascinates me when I think of the large number of professors that had a profound impact on me when they only ever had a time span of four short months to make that impact. I say with all honesty and honour that these professors are unmatched by any other of which I have heard, and in my opinion, there is prestige in being a "Saint Mary's University-calibre professor".

When I think of my adult life (however short it might be thus far), I easily dichotomize it into 'pre-applying to Saint Mary's' and 'post-applying to Saint Mary's'. Alternate names for these periods could easily be 'before I believed in myself', and 'my new start on life', respectively. The path I was on before I attended Saint Mary's was a dull and uninspiring one. I worked aimlessly at an unrewarding job, didn't attend school for some time, along the while, losing faith in my abilities to succeed in life. Upon the advice of those close to me, I took initiative and applied to Saint Mary's. This, without a doubt, would be the turning point I was looking for, the one I so desperately needed. Attending SMU opened my eyes to what was available to a person who wanted to work for it. That 'what' turned out to be absolutely anything.

One thing I have discovered while attending Saint Mary's is that a good university, a great university, is more than just the sum of its parts. Don't get me wrong, it certainly helps to have an excellent selection of courses and programmes, great professors, friendly and hard working administration, a beautiful campus and unmatched student-school spirit, but there is something extra that can't be articulated that makes us love this place. Everyone moving together and working hard to create a university like no other is what Saint Mary's inspires us to do. It has

inspired me to be magnificent, because I have the power to be, if I am willing to push myself.

As I said in my opening, I feel so much respect for Saint Mary's University, and the people here. My respect is probably only matched by my gratitude. I am very aware that without this place I would not be where I am today, on a stepping stone to a great life. I owe unforgettable experiences, fabulous friends and reinforced self-confidence to this university. I am a Saint Mary's University graduate, and that is something that cannot be taken away from me. And even after all the great things I intend to do from here on out, that might be the title of which I am most proud.



Meghan Dooks receives her prize from Pat Crowley, Director of Alumni.