



By Michael Hensgen '19

Good afternoon Dr. Fedewa, Board of Trustees, educators, families, friends, and graduates.

Here at Gibbons, I've learned so much from the best teachers anyone could ask for.

I've received top-notch support and training from my coaches -- meeting us for track workouts as early as 4:30 a.m. so we could run in cooler temperatures and be on time for class -- hundreds of practices, pep talks, texts, phone calls, and team road trips -- four-years of sharing expertise, patience, time, and love. We wouldn't be standing here now without our coaches and teachers and all that you've given us.

From friends, classmates, and teammates, we've received camaraderie and support. We've enjoyed so many fun times. We rejoice in each other's accomplishments and help each other overcome challenges.

From demanding the best from our teammates at every practice to collaborating with lab partners to carefully construct the perfect Pringle Ringle in physics class -- we've worked together to improve ourselves and each other.

And our families: how could we begin to describe all that our families have done for us? They have supported and loved us through every step of our journeys.

Their support is borne of the encouragement and time I've received since I was little -- my grandfather cheering me on time after time, darting around my backyard for hours rebounding balls and diligently tracking how many swishes I'd made in a row while I shot baskets from my trampoline.

From holding a stick up for me to leap and touch, testing how high I could jump before school every day to going over every race plan before meets, Papa, you have simultaneously challenged, coached, taught, and encouraged me.

My grandmother, 89-years-old and left with a mind stripped of most memory and a virtually immobile skin-on-bones body, had power to encourage that endures beyond her death. Always focused on others, she met her slow-approaching death peacefully, bravely, and lovingly. She exclaimed to every visitor for as long as she had the ability to speak, "You're just who I wanted to see!"

I knew she meant it. Every time. Spending time and being present with her comforted and uplifted her, just as her spending time with me on our countless walks to elementary school encouraged me every day. My memories of her encourage me to embrace things that challenge me as well as things I love. Meanwhile, I'm reminded to share love and peace in my own way and to encourage others.

How do we transform from excited graduates into the selfless grandparents who are willing to spend hours on end playing games and piecing together puzzles with us? How do we transform into the math teacher who cares so much that he never missed a single day of class in the two years he taught us? How do we transform into the classmate that stays up for hours studying and explaining hard concepts on long calls? How do we transform into the parent that read me all the then-published Harry Potter books before I could read myself?

We will reflect on and appreciate the past and all the time and encouragement we've been given. The time our coaches gave us that went above and beyond their job description. The time my grandfather spent with me as if nothing was more important. The time our chemistry teacher took to meet with us before school twice a week, so we could get labs in. Now, we will continue to spend our time building relationships while we emulate in our new college communities the selfless examples you've set. We will use our time to foster our new friendships and continue old ones, spreading all the encouragement we have received.

It's exhilarating to think about where we are heading and what we'll do and achieve. No doubt, along with the excitement, we will face unexpected challenges and obstacles. As we do, we will remember and emulate the examples of encouragement and selflessness all of you have shown us. We will succeed by sharing in our own ways the love, support, time, and encouragement we've found here at Gibbons.

So, this really isn't goodbye. We will always be able to see each other again, and tell each other, meaning it every time, "You're just who I wanted to see".