

Connor Teehan Speech

Good morning, and congratulations to the Delbarton class of 2021. It's an honor not only to welcome you and your families to today's Commencement ceremony, but to call each and every one of you my brothers.

The past year has been anything but typical. From the daily magnus submissions to sporadic weeks of virtual learning, this year was tumultuous to say the least. Yet, through the dedication of our teachers and administrators—from Father Michael all the way to teachers we see everyday in class—we were able to preserve some semblance of normalcy for our senior year. So to Delbarton's faculty and staff, thank you for letting us end our senior year on a high note.

To all the Delbarton parents who have watched your sons grow these last four or more years, you have helped keep us safe during the most difficult of times. Your role in keeping our school year afloat cannot be understated.

Spread across four of the most transformative years of our lives, high school is supposed to be a place that allows students to grow as individuals. It's an opportunity to explore new fields and passions without restraint. A chance to discover new friendships. But at Delbarton, those four years foster much more.

At its core, Delbarton is defined by our brotherhood. Although, when I first came to Delbarton, I had no grasp of what that actually meant. From the outside looking in, it seemed like no more than a catchphrase.

And that's because the brotherhood that we thrive on can hardly be captured by a single phrase or sentence. The brotherhood that we know is best captured through a lens of action. We've trekked to Metlife in support of the football team and we've flooded the New Gym when wrestling upset BC to claim #1 in the state. Yet, we've just as regularly hopped onto a call to help a classmate the night before a test or checked in on a friend when times got rough. Each of these moments are a singular snapshot of the Delbarton experience that we all share. They highlight the acts of camaraderie and community that words fail to describe. At every level—big or small—we're there for one other. As brothers and as friends.

Unfortunately, last spring, we lost the campus that had been the epicenter of our Delbarton careers thus far. With the outbreak of COVID-19, all of us were suddenly locked in our homes, farther away from campus and each other than ever before.

While we stepped back on campus this September, we all knew that this year was going to be far different than any other. We were quite literally walking around with half our faces covered and forced to stay physically separate by six feet at all times. Most sporting events were entirely shut off to fans, and those that weren't faced tight caps.

Even worse, the past winter was characterized by endless weeks of launching Zoom just to learn through a screen, detached from anything that would typify a regular school year.

Over the past year and a half, we'd lost nearly every physical connection to campus and to each other. In the face of an indeterminate pandemic, it seemed that the brotherhood we'd spent the last three years building would come crumbling down.

Yet, in true Delbarton fashion, that wasn't the case at all. If anything, Delbarton's brotherhood grew stronger than I had ever seen. For every athletic match or after-school event that allowed it, Delbarton students covered the stands. I found myself getting to better know my peers around me, developing relationships that I hadn't even touched in years prior. While COVID posed a major threat to our community, we responded by strengthening the bonds with those around us.

As Spring rolled around, campus life began to return to normal. The bonds that had grown so strong off campus quickly seeped back onto school grounds. Seniors scattered the Garden. Games of Spikeball and Cornhole were played nonstop. Simply put, we had got our home back and did not want to leave. Here, we saw the full force of our brotherhood.

That brings me to the bittersweet reason that we're here today. In a few moments, we'll all be getting our diplomas and leaving campus no longer students. I had always considered that to be the final snapshot of our Delbarton careers.

In reality, that's as far from the truth as it gets. Our journey as students may have come to an end, but the life-long friendships we've so greatly forged persist well beyond the moment we leave this stage. COVID proved that the bonds of brotherhood don't break under the most strenuous of circumstances. Even as colleges or careers lead us far from campus, the communal bond we all share will persist.

I've had the privilege of being a part of this brotherhood these past six years. I've been shaped by my peers and grown alongside true friends. So thank you to all my brothers, who've made my time at Delbarton the best I could imagine.

Thank you.