

maya L-S



Foreword



I don't know if you can remember the first words you learned when you were young, but I remember a few of the first words that I taught my children: please and thank you! To this day, they still seem like good first words to speak and understand.

As you graduate from Westridge School, I suspect you have been exposed to more words than most as your parents, teachers, advisors, counselors, and coaches have helped you grow as readers, writers, thinkers, scientists, mathematicians, artists, musicians, and athletes, to name a few. We hope that in this process, you have found your own voice and expressed it in all the work you've done, both inside and outside the classroom. We also hope you have learned that words matter; in a nanosecond, you can build someone up or cut them down with your words.

"Words to Grow By" is a collection of advice from people who care about you and want to see you thrive in whatever you choose to do in the future. This is advice that people wish they could give their younger selves and are passing on to you. When you need a little inspiration or support, we hope that you will take these "pearls of wisdom," reflect on them, and claim them as your own if they resonate with you. We have also included the words you shared with us to describe your essence, and sprinkled them throughout this collection.

Finally, let me say thank you to the Class of 2022 for sharing yourselves with all of us- in the classroom, on Teams and Zoom, on stage, and on the athletics field. Thank you allowing us to be part of your lives. May these words touch your heart as much as your presence has touched ours. Please read them with the thoughtfulness with which they've been written. I'd also like to thank the contributors who are listed at the conclusion of "Words to Grow By," Bonnie Singh for creating this booklet, and a special thank you to your classmate, Maya Lin-Stevens, for designing the beautiful cover of this collection.

Keep growing,
Mrs. O'Grady



Passionate

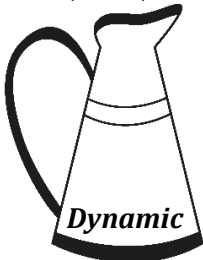
Get outside your comfort zone! College is a time to try things, experiment, and figure out who you are and what you want. Join clubs and take extra classes that have nothing to do with your major. Travel whenever you can and if you're in a new city, explore it. Don't wait for an invitation to start new things - time flies quicker than you think!



Be kind. The freak out that you are feeling will pass. Promise.



Take all the weirdest-sounding classes, the ones you can't believe exist, and also find out who the truly awesome professors are and take whatever they teach. Disregard the previous for any classes held at 8 am. Take literature classes, always, no matter your major. Take a studio art class. Be in a play, or build the set. Take Psychology 101. Wear flip-flops in the shower.





Visionary

Getting into college is just the start, not the end of the journey.

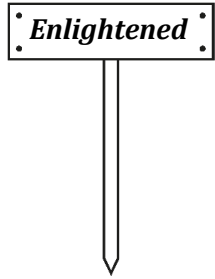


I read a poem in college that still resonates with me. The gist is, "Only the people who risk are free." Get outside of your comfort zone. The more you do so, the easier it will be. Those experiences will be the ones that help shape you. Everyone at this point in your life is just trying to survive. Try not to take things personally. Keep being involved. Don't wait to be invited, but invite people to join you.



Do not compare the choices you made to fictional versions of what you think would have happened by choices you didn't make since, as somebody once told me, "The grass isn't greener on the other side, it's just a different shade of green."





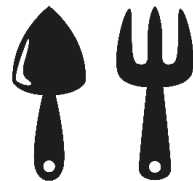
Invest your time in your relationships with family and friends. You don't have to know what you want to do, just do what seems interesting and see where it takes you. Life is how you choose to perceive your situation and how you respond. Choose to perceive the positive and respond with grace and humility. Your legacy is how you treat others, so be a good human.

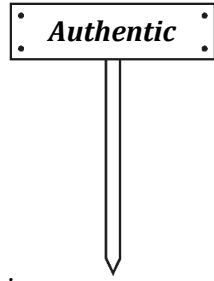


Take the opportunity for an adventure and also don't be afraid to talk to your professors.



Accept failures for what they are: opportunities in disguise. Some of the greatest life lessons come from the hardest falls.





Failure isn't failure, as you think it is.
First, it's inevitable. Second, it allows you to
show grit. Third, it teaches you empathy.



In the words of John Mulaney, "College is like
a four-year game show called 'Do my friends
hate me or do I just need to go to sleep?'"
There are some days that you might feel a
little lonely, especially if you're far away
from home. Drink water, get enough sleep,
invite friends over, watch a comfort movie,
call family, get something good to eat, and
remember that there are people who care
about you.



Love yourself and respect others. Make good
connections and explore your new life!
Always come back home when you need us.
Create your bright future!





Peaceful

Do things! Walk a lot, try new foods, visit museums, talk to strangers, befriend your neighbors, take weekend excursions, support local, see theatre. A simple, effective way to work toward a more empathetic and equitable future is to put yourself in close proximity to as many different kinds of people as possible. Also, remember that success and happiness are two different things; they must be pursued individually!



Hook your future self up! Only you can make the bed you will lay in in the future, so what will this bed look like? Silk sheets, organic cotton, in a beautiful spacious perfect temperature room? Well... Get to work then! Don't forget to reward yourself AFTER accomplishing even the smallest of goals.



You are beautiful and should never doubt it. Love yourself above all else.





Inquisitive

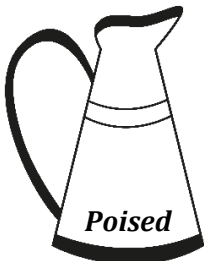
Go to all the shows, concerts, plays, performances, exhibits, games, activities your college/university offers. Your tuition is paying for the overall "experience", not just your classes. You will never have so many different things to do at your fingertips. Try them all, be random, meet people from different majors than you!



Be careful - if you look for a sign, you will see one. Wherever you go, there you are - the grass is not greener and you will not be a different person in a different location. There is no perfect school - education is what you make of it. Listen to and trust yourself. Don't live with your friends in college.



Your journey will likely not be linear. Soak up the various twists and turns along the way. Trust your instincts, stretch your comfortable limits, and enjoy the ride!





Transformative

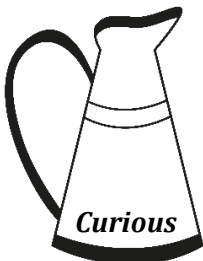
First and foremost, be so very proud of yourselves. What you value now, may not be what you value at 22 or even 25. It's okay to have goals, and it's okay for those goals to change and shift as you get older. Remember to trust life's journey because it will all fall into place. Lastly, remember water, moisturizer, sunblock, and movement everyday!



Slow down, explore, seek new opportunities, network, take more history classes, keep swimming, run often.



Enjoy the journey and have fun! Only you can make the most of your experiences and only you can define success for yourself. Don't be so focused you lose sight of what really matters, and don't be afraid to put yourself out there!





Enthusiastic

Remember to cherish every moment. The good things, you'll remember. The bad things, you'll learn from. And floss!



Be honest (with yourself) about what motivates and interests you (versus what others are doing or saying you should do). Do good research about your opportunities and pathways in pursuit of what motivates and interests you. Ask thoughtful questions of your mentors and role models. Also, always take good care of yourself - none of this matters if you aren't healthy in mind, body and spirit!



It's OK to make mistakes. Learn from your mistakes but don't let them define you. Don't eat too much junk food only because you are too busy or want to save money--it's not worth it.





Dependable

Don't limit yourself. Give yourself the freedom to explore new pursuits, without feeling you have to be "good" at them immediately. Don't be afraid to fail. Be aware of echo chambers. Stay open to new thoughts and ideas that challenge you. You will either widen your perspective or more clearly define your beliefs. Learn as much as you can about as many different things as you can. Call your mother often.



Don't be in such a hurry for huge success and pay less attention to the boys!



Take advantage of internships. Step outside your comfort zone by taking part in extracurricular activities that may vary from your typical interests. Make room for new friends.





Intentional

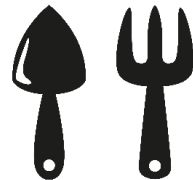
Study abroad. Trust yourself to know what is best for yourself. Not on the small, everyday decisions, but on the big, life-altering ones. Be strong enough to disappoint people. I love to surf. I am not a good surfer. Maybe one day I will be, but the joy of a wipeout far outweighs the pain of not paddling out. Call home from time to time.



Trust your instincts. Don't ignore that feeling in your gut. It is usually right! Know Thy Self & be patient with who you are & who you are becoming. Be kind & encouraging to yourself; don't let the punitive, self-doubting voice take over.



An underrated method for choosing your major: think about the type of people you want to be around on a regular basis. One of the best parts of my job is hanging out with other history majors every day.





Adventurous

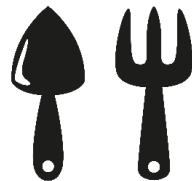
Eat less ramen. Go overseas. Befriend a nerd with exceptional investment acumen.



Don't be afraid to try new things. Broaden your horizons. Have fun. Keep an open mind. Don't be afraid to pivot. Learn to recognize when you need to cut your losses and try to cut your losses early. Listen to others and try to learn from them. Do the work...there are no shortcuts. Things always seem the darkest before the dawn. Persevere. Don't give up! Success is just around the corner.



Use college to gain knowledge to become your most authentic self, to communicate as that true self, and to have enough awareness to make the best choices to walk through your life as yourself, wholly able to give and receive real lasting love.



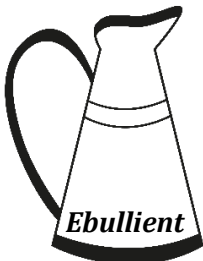


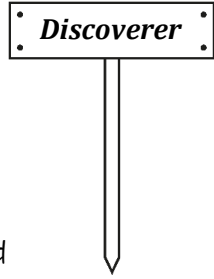
Enterprising

There is a movie where the parent is yelling out the door to her child saying, "Make good choices!" The tone of this was, "Look how embarrassing that parent is," yet it stands true. You have so little control over so much in life, but you do have control over the choices you make. Please go forward remembering to make good ones!



Spend time getting to know yourself, listen to what makes you happy, not what makes others happy. You are a Goddess so remember that when fear, doubt or worry creep in, they are only passing through. There is no right way, only your way, your path, your lessons to learn while being human on this planet. And ignore the trance of unworthiness because the world is so happy you are here. I know I am and you are so loved.





Surround yourself with positive and supportive friends and cultivate those friendships. It takes work. Find a mentor. Explore, explore, explore.



"Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. I do that every day. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength. It shows you have the courage to admit when you don't know something, and to learn something new." (Barack Obama)



Don't worry about having your career path 100% sorted before you go to college. College years are the best path to discover who you want to be on this earth. Slow down, meet new people, make memories and enjoy it.



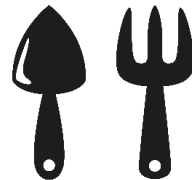


Adaptable

Carpe Diem! You will never have this time in your life again so enjoy every moment and say yes to as many new experiences and opportunities as you can! Take the time to nurture new friendships and to have fun - it's not only about the work. Follow your passion, be kind to yourself and others and always do what is honest and right. Did I say have fun and laugh a lot?!



Promise yourself to choose the things in life that mean the most to you. Hold on to your dreams, believe in your ideas and follow the voice in your heart. Enjoy the simple pleasures and make laughter an important part of each day. Remember that play is as essential as hard work. Don't be afraid to change course if you need to, new insights and awareness will come throughout your life, stay tuned in to YOU and your work and relationships will be clearer. Stay hydrated and keep moving, onward and upward! Good luck everyone.





Reflective

The world is a wondrous but fragile place. Have fun while exploring it and the opportunities it has but take care of it. Be kind and gracious. Own your mistakes. Failures are not an end point but rather a way to improve yourself. Above all, follow your dreams and passions - the journey is the reward

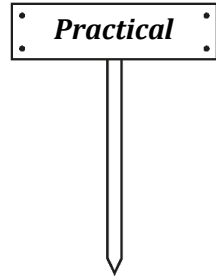


You can have *anything* you want in life, but you can't have everything you want - and deciding what you want is the hardest part.



Don't let wanting to be perfect, or in control, or concerns about being vulnerable prevent you from opening up to experiences and fully enjoying life.



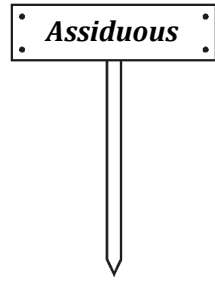


I'm letting my favorite Co-Star push notifications do the talking for me: "Do not fear the future," "You can trust your own nature," "Be open to discomfort," "Talk to people who challenge you to be better," "Welcome change, rather than trying to control it," and "Show up."



Don't be in a rush to make best friends immediately in college. It takes time to find people who share your same values. Don't be afraid to initiate a conversation; if you're feeling insecure, most likely everyone else is feeling the same way. This might be the connection that leads to your most cherished friendship. Ask questions, lots of them. You'll learn more than you thought possible!

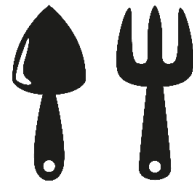


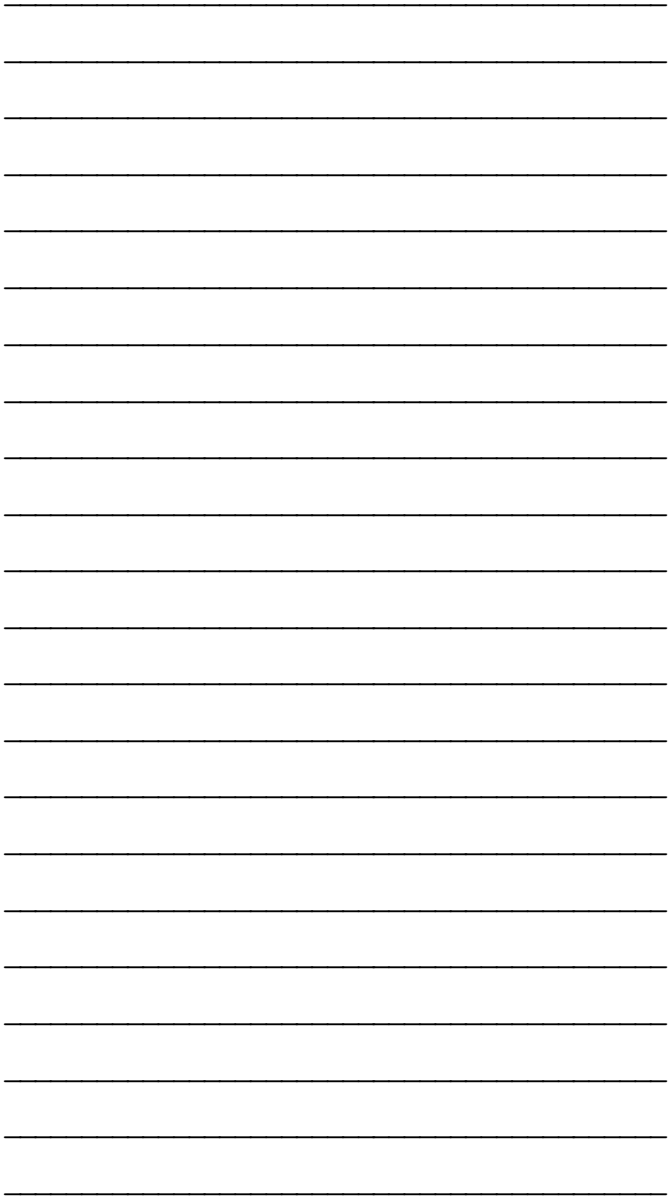


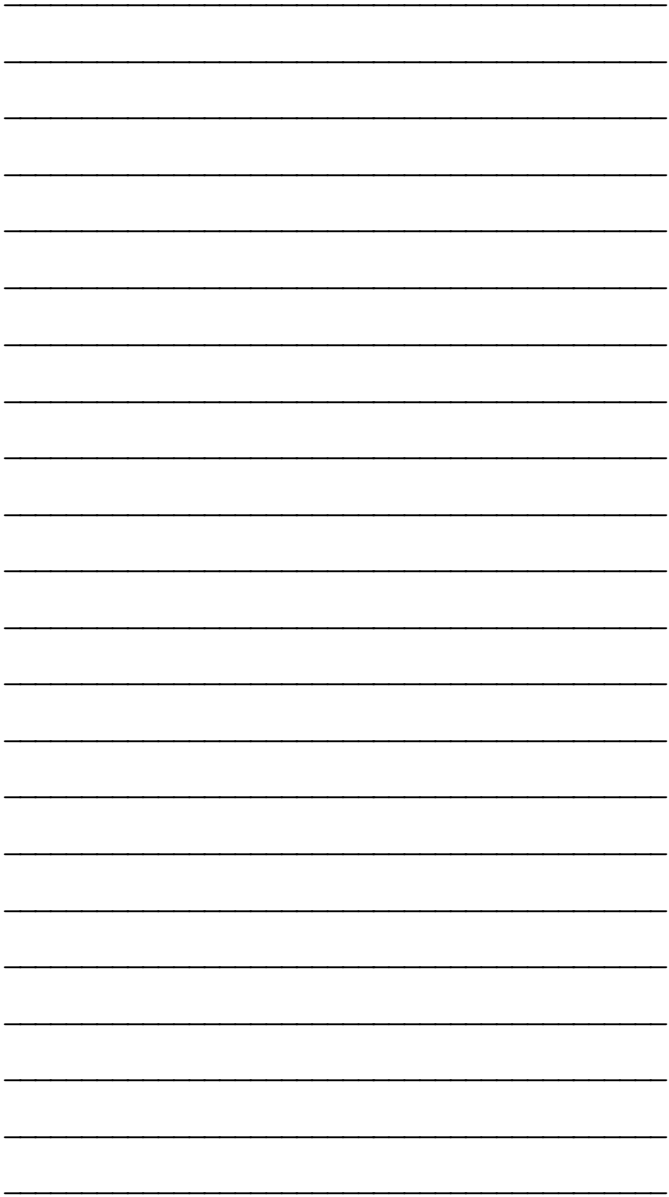
Believe it or not, you might change your majors several times, but you will find your passion. And everything leading up to that discovery will make sense in retrospect. The sooner you get comfortable with uncertainty, the more likely you will find your path.



Open your heart and mind to all that the world puts before you. Seek balance and moderation. Don't let fear guide your decisions. Find joy in small things. You've already got what you need for this journey. Trust yourself. The unexpected can lead to the best discoveries. A good night's sleep makes everything seem better in the morning. You're more capable than you might think. Enjoy life!









Senior Word Contributors



Eloise A.

Katelyn B.

Jessica C.

Charisma C.

Riya D.

Juliana F.

Ileia G.

Annabel G.

Sadie G.

Grace G.

Z G.

Sarah H.

Julian H.

Hannya K.

Caroline K.

Katharine L.

Maya L.-S.

Natalia L.

Izzy M.

Meztli M.

Marly M.

Molly M.

Tamara M.

Grace N.

Tori N.

Simone O.

Jacqueline P.

Olivia Q.

Bibi R.

Claire S.

Jessica T.

Audrey T.

Sonaya V.-W.

Emmie W.

Blaire W.

Shuli W.

Xintong W.

Charlotte Z.



Quote Contributors



Gary Baldwin
Dan Calmeyer
Dana Calvo
Samantha Chaffin
Hank Chilton
Pam Chilton
Vinay Duddalwar
Julie Ehrhardt
Kerri Epps
Audrey & Kenneth Fong
Jack Fritz
Rebeca Frohmader
Bex Green
Jacqueline Gutierrez
Katrin Haberstock
Lloyd Hansen
William Harrison
Laura Hatchman
Michele Hemmings
Jen Irish
Sarah Jallo
Melissa Kelley
Brandon Kruhm
Dora Kwan

Sabrina Leon
Tina Li
Eric Libicki
Jean Lin
Mary McCloud
Jennifer McCreight
Elizabeth McGregor
Whitney Morgan
Jorge Munoz
Jenny Ni
Lynn O'Grady
Kathleen O'Reilly
Jessica Pérez del Toro
Marcie Robinson
Margaret Shoemaker
Bonnie Singh
Sha'Trece Slaughter
Wesley Stahler
Matt Stevens
Val Trimarchi
Katie Wei
Xuesong Wu
Molly Yurchak



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