

Grace Jean '26



Hers is a voice that sparkles with charisma, dazzles with insight, and inspires others to embrace their own stories. When you hear Grace Jean '26 speak, you can't help but listen.

Whether she is performing poetry, singing with The Bearitones, giving a speech as Vice President of the tenth grade, delivering lines in a play, sharing her thoughts in English class, or cracking jokes with her teammates on the volleyball team, Grace's voice is one that demands attention.

It wasn't always like this. Believe it or not, Grace wasn't always as confident as she is now. "I was shy in elementary school," Grace swears. "I was hesitant to break out of my comfort zone." Grace recalls struggling to believe in and advocate for herself during this time; she remembers how eager she felt to join a community that encourages students to take risks and try new things.

During her seventh and eighth grade years at Ursuline, Grace navigated a new school environment, made lots of friends, and pursued her studies. She tried new sports like soccer and volleyball. But by the time ninth grade rolled around, she was ready to ramp things up. "At the start of my freshman year at Ursuline, I dared myself to try as many new things as possible." Grace explains, smiling. "Let me tell you about what I call: 'My Year of Risk Taking.'"

It started in the fall when Grace campaigned to be President of the Class of 2026 — and won.

In the winter, she joined the track team even though she is not a runner by nature. “That was a challenge,” Grace reflects. “It was difficult to accept that I am not as good at running as the other girls — but that is OK. My teammates were so supportive and they taught me that no one is ‘bad at running.’ My goal that year was to run the whole time during practice... it took a whole season but I got there!”

Next, she performed an original poem at Ursuline’s annual talent show. Her performance was so moving, student Emily Helm ‘24 approached Grace after the show and encouraged her to join the Speech and Debate Team. “I felt nervous because I was a freshman and at that time, the Speech Team was made up of mostly seniors. But after Emily asked, more club members approached me and encouraged me to join as well. So I did!”

In the spring, she auditioned for the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and performed as Chava. Memorizing lines and learning songs were new experiences for Grace that required hard work. Grace felt a connection with her character and discovered that she loves performing. At rehearsals, Grace was once again encouraged by her peers to add another extracurricular to her list: The Bearitones, Ursuline’s student-run acapella group. She did.

When I ask Grace how she is so brave — brave enough to perform original poetry in front of the whole school, brave enough to try out for new activities with no prior experience, brave enough to dedicate a whole year as her “Year of Risk Taking” — she doesn’t hesitate. “I know that this community has my back,” she says. Knowing that the community at Ursuline wants her to succeed makes Grace comfortable with the idea of failure.

Grace reflected on the time she sang the national anthem at a UA basketball game and stumbled on the high note. Instead of it being an awkward situation, Ursuline students in the stands started singing too — they joined together in harmony to help Grace finish the song.

Even though Grace’s performance did not go as planned, she did not let that stop her from singing at another basketball game later on in the season. She says: “It was scary since I messed up the first time, but with Head of School Levesque’s words of encouragement I got through the song and didn’t mess up. I just felt like I couldn’t end on a bad note, so I did it again.”

She shared another story of being in third-to-last place during a difficult track workout and feeling discouraged. When she looked up, she saw her teachers Mr. Ward, Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Choiniere and heard their voices cheer her on — which inspired her to keep moving forward.

Believe it or not, Grace's adventures do not end there. She has joined another singing club: the Choral Group, which performs at special events and masses. She is a member of Ursuline's Racial Justice Club. She plays for Ursuline's volleyball team. She has accepted the position of Secretary of the Speech and Debate Team and performs her own poetry at competitions. Most recently, she came in first place for poetry reading at the Revere Fall Fest competition.

Grace is a storyteller by nature. It's clear whether she is sharing a story at lunch or mid-performance. She has a deep appreciation for the stories she reads in English class, which inspire her to make an effort to understand herself and others more fully. She has the rare gift of being able to convey these observations beautifully through her writing and in speech. Grace has a love of life that is contagious, an authenticity that is compelling, and a kind heart that cares for others. She embodies the Ursuline ideals of courage and joy.

May Grace's trailblazing "Year of Risk-Taking" inspire all of us to dream bigger, act bolder, and live more fully.