

Hi everybody.

I finally get to feel like an Honors 101 professor– everyone looking at me, only probably paying attention.

It's been a while since our community was together like this, even though there's not nearly as many here as there was four years ago, gathering into Galvin. I guess because it's not mandatory? Who's to say.

Still, I'm having mental flashbacks right now to those guys in Dante's Inferno, getting boiled in blood. Perks of being an Honors student – understanding these bad jokes.

In the past three years, we who are here have only been able to see each other in passing, scattered in other classes, or through Facebook – as a large group, I mean. We don't see people in the halls of Campion, or on their way to Galvin, or stumbling onto others watching TV in the lounges, or when we are banging on doors when people are laughing too loud and it's midnight and you're stressed because there's a paper due in a month which means it's basically due tomorrow. I was totally guilty of being that room, sorry.

On the other hand, Honors friends, I'm totally not sorry. I'm grateful for Honors, and everything that includes, the highs and the lows. And Honors One Oh Fun. I think I still have a recording of Professor Danford's "bedtime story". Just to continue the theme and bring it back to the original text, Honors changed everything for me like Descartes thinking about wax or Isaac fighting the mystery person in a river. Still not entirely sure what that was about, and it's been four years.

Freshman year was a lot of stress and chaos. Oh, the following years have been, too. The Honors program is a unique college experience that everyone went through differently, but I'm pretty confident we all learned something outside of the books, even if it's just how much you can procrastinate. We also did incredible things. We read the books and thought hard about them. We developed quality friendships – I know I will forever call my closest Honors friends my family – and we followed our passions and juggled the schedules of taking the other Honors classes with our majors and minors, our hobbies and interests and jobs and duties and other commitments. We got here, in this room, and I say: we thrived.

Just being a part of this opportunity to challenge ourselves is incredible of us.. Together we – the students, the faculty we so remember, the staff – shoutout to Lorri Walsh – in our efforts to learn together from each other have been living and spreading Loyola’s ideas of Ignatian scholarship. It’s cura personalis, too – caring for the whole person by leaning in to our learning. We chose this path to keep ourselves on our toes, to engage our minds and our curiosities. We had every chance to quit and drop, easy as pie. But we here? We didn’t.

Yes, we worked hard academically. You all heard the statistics Professor Katz said – that was amazing. But we didn’t learn anything that only had the purpose of getting us our grades. The skills we developed we can apply to our futures, whether it be grad school, careers, or getting to know strangers as we travel around the world. The community we’ve built has given us relationships that will last us lifetimes. We Class of 2019 Honors students are going to get up to a lot. I already know it. With all that I’ve said and beyond, we’re all pretty much Odysseus. Honors is like our boat we use to get around. We might be even better than him, since many minds are greater than even that one.

So thank you, everybody, for the times we have had in all of our groups, for the community we formed as a whole, and for you, like the Honors program, being greater than the sum of your parts. I wish you all the very best.