



5-7-2017

## Remarks of Class President

Marissa Cozzi '17

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### Recommended Citation

Cozzi, Marissa '17, "Remarks of Class President" (2017). *Commencement*. 79.  
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## Commencement

### Remarks of Class President



Marissa Cozzi

May 7, 2017

#### **Marissa Cozzi '17**

Good Afternoon, my name is Marissa Cozzi and I am this year's Class President. It was an absolute honor to be elected by my class and have the opportunity to speak to you today. My classmates believe in me, but more importantly, they believe in themselves and all of the wonderful accomplishments they are going to have. That isn't to say they didn't have an incredible support system. Therefore, on behalf of the graduates, I would sincerely like to thank all of the families, faculty, staff, and friends for being here today. You have no idea what this means to us. Now, as the infamous thinker Ferris Bueller once said, "life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could

miss it” I know he is no Aristotle, but that doesn’t mean this quote doesn’t ring some truth. So, let’s do that. Let’s just take a second, look around, and take it in because this is the kind of moment that only happens once.

Now that we have ingrained this moment forever, I can move forward. I’ll be candid for a moment, I went back and forth on possible topics to speak on today. There are always those cliché speeches about giving insight on the “real world”, but let’s be honest. I don’t know anymore about the real world than anyone else, besides, looking out to the group in front of me I see strong, talented, and inspirational people filling those chairs. What words of wisdom could I possibly provide? The Class of 2017 has truly left its mark on Illinois Wesleyan University. We have had an impact and we have made a difference.

Most of us didn’t start out being the fabulous leaders we are today, at least I didn’t, so let’s start at the beginning. It was late August, the family car was packed to the brim, and you finally met your first-year roommate, which thankfully in my case turned out to be spectacular. We all managed to make friends and those friends quickly turned into our family. To my first group of friends, thank you for making IWU feel like a home. Marissa and the MTs forever!

In addition to friends, our first year at Illinois Wesleyan consisted of many learning experiences. We learned how to make the perfect milkshake in Saga, find ways to procrastinate until Ames closed, and that changing your major is more than okay, even if you do it more than once.... We learned about the world around us, and how to broaden our horizons. We wanted to become a part of something bigger than ourselves.

We ended the year feeling great and excited to return. In the following years, we began to truly find our passions and define ourselves as individuals. We were given the opportunities not just to find ourselves, but to actually create ourselves.

Over time, we determined our majors, studied abroad, and walked past more event posters than we could count. We became frequent customers at the career center and finally saw the value in going to office hours. We became involved in campus activities and sought out connections amongst people involved in those groups. We became invested in sports teams, Greek organizations, student government, clubs, and service to the point where our out of the classroom experiences became as impactful as the lessons taught in the classroom.

So here’s to all the all-nighters spent studying for a test, to the professors that became mentors, and the floor mates that became family. Here’s to the long time pals we met only because we forced ourselves to sit with random strangers at lunch. Here’s to the families that have always supported us, to the professors that extended deadlines, and to the experiences we created for ourselves. As Maya Angelou once said, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”. Over the last four years, we have made connections that will last us a lifetime. We have shared endless laughs, memories, and, quite frankly, absolute stress.

But after all this, we learned something undeniable, if something is important to you, you will find a way, if not, you will find an excuse. Now looking at the group in front of me, it is safe to say that reaching this moment is pretty important to each and every one of you, because we’re here. We did it!

Now, we may not have all come from the same background and we certainly won’t follow the same path moving forward, but right now, we are all together. So, if I could give you one piece of advice, I know, I said I wouldn’t, be here it goes: find what you love to do and just do it. There will be people who support you and others who don’t, but that’s OK. If you manage to please everybody, it probably means you aren’t making a difference.

As Provost Green reminded us earlier this week, this ceremony is called commencement for a reason. The fundamental definition of commencement is “a beginning or start.” So this ceremony is rightfully named because this is the beginning. This is the beginning of the rest of our lives and no matter where life takes us, we are always welcome home to Illinois Wesleyan.

Contact: [commence@iwu.edu](mailto:commence@iwu.edu)

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