Salutatorian Speech - Hung Nguyen

Good morning to our guest speaker Mr. Page, faculty, Members of the Board of Directors, guests, family, friends, and classmates. Welcome to the Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2014. I speak on behalf of my classmates when I say thank you for sharing this special day with us. Each of you played a very important part in our education and we recognize the importance of you being with us today. There is no one else we would rather share this day with.

When I first learned that I earned the rank of salutatorian, I looked for inspiration to help me write my speech. However, as I looked over many crazy ideas, I did not find any that fit what I really wanted to say to you for this last time. What I can tell you today, after my time in high school, is that I know what I truly believe.

I believe in the value of our friendships.

Spending my whole high school life at Marianapolis, I realize how much your friendship means to me. It is here at Marianapolis that I learned that no matter where you come from and who you are, we can be friends. True friendship is blind of those service aspects. I remember the first day of school. There were many new faces welcoming me with many questions. "Where are you from?" and "What grade are you in?" and many other questions. Even though I could not answer you due to my lack of English skills, you were all so patient. You repeated yourselves, spoke slowly, and waited until I totally understood. Perhaps, many of you don't know this, but when I talked with all of you, I had such strong feelings of jealousy. I was jealous of your ability

to speak English, your excitement, and how comfortable you were in this environment. Being unable to speak English clearly at that time stopped me from opening up myself to anyone. It is all of you that pulled me out of my fear. You all inspired me to explore a new world and you all brought me with you.

As time moved on, our friendships became deeper and deeper. We all grew up in this school, not only in our classes, but also in our daily lives. We had fights, we shared our tears, we laughed a lot, and we deepened our understanding of each other. An older wise man once said, "one of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood." I think I finally get what he meant. I have come to realize that you, my friends, have become a second family, people I can rely on no matter what.

I believe in the value of faith.

Here at Marianapolis, I have come to understand faith's true meaning. I find my definition to be very simple: the belief that others have in you and the belief that you have in yourself. It is a sign of faith when your friends see you fall down and rather than helping you stand right back up, they tell you to stand on your own feet; they support you and teach you to do it on your own. It is a sign of faith when you look in your teacher's eyes, and you see the happiness coming from their heart when you are successful on your own. It is a sign of faith from your parents when you have a phone call from Vietnam and hear familiar voices from your loved ones, and it warms your heart.

After my years at Marianapolis, I have come to realize that faith is very important in my life. It gives me strength. It contributed to my success, fading away any doubts, and giving me confidence to move on. Without these acts of faith from those beloved ones, family, friends, teachers, I would not have become the Hung of today, standing before you as your salutatorian. I believe each of us here has developed their faith. No matter how different our faith can be, at the end, there is one common thing between you and me: we all live by faith.

I believe in the value of our memories.

Memories were built the moment I stepped on this campus and I remember them all. My first memory of living in a foreign land will be with me forever. Even though I experienced living away from my family for several years, it was more challenging than I thought it would be. However, it is you guys who made my life become more meaningful than ever here. I remember those first days. I had no idea how to do anything. Everything is so different from what I was used to in Vietnam. I remember how stupid I was when I tried to microwave marshmallows and it ended up exploding everywhere. I remember how frustrated I was when I tried to do a bunch of homework written in a language that wasn't familiar to me, but in the end, my teachers knew what they were doing and I still got an A even though I did very poorly on the grammar parts. I remember how silly it was when I confessed my true love to a person, but I got rejected. But, it is

you, after laughing at me for microwaving marshmallows, who was willing to clean up with me. It was you, the teacher who said, "I appreciated your efforts in these

assignments despite the grammar mistakes you made." And, it was you, the person who rejected me and told me to move on because you are too young to totally understand what love really is.

There are so many memories that are coming back to all of us this weekend. Being at this moment, on this stage, I realize how much I want to go back in time to experience them once again. Would I change anything I did? Maybe. But I know that these times made me who I am today. Thank you for the memories we had together.

Last but not least, I want to thank all the families here today and especially my family here and in Vietnam. Family, without your help, I would not have made it here to study in America. Without your help, I would have stayed the little boy who never wanted to grow up. During my years here at Marianapolis, you did everything possible to let me explore the world by myself, to learn how to live my life happily in my own way. Mom and Dad, I want to give my special thanks to you. You are the best teachers in my life, the guiding light that continues to shine no matter what.

Before I give my final farewell, I would like to recite one of my favorite songs, "Graduation" by Vitamin C. "As we go on, we remember all the times we had together. And as our lives change, come whatever, we will still be Friends Forever."

I am very proud to be a member of the Class of 2014. Growing up with you, building memories, and building a tie that will never be broken. No matter where we will go and who we become, we are always the members of the Marianapolis Class of 2014. Never forget what you truly believe in and who you are. Goodbye to you, my friends.