

Our Time in T-Shirts

President Bruno, Provost Perruci, Trustees, Mr. Bernstein, faculty, staff, friends, family, you are joined here today by the most outstanding group of individuals I have come to know: the Marietta College Class of 2013. We have wowed you with our academic sense, our athletic and artistic talents, our good looks and charming personalities. We started from the bottom, and now we're here. *We are* MC. We depart time-honored Marietta with the tools to be successful in our chosen fields, with the confidence to be leaders in our endeavors, and with more t-shirts than we know what to do with. Allow me to explain.

On a recent Sunday morning I found myself folding a load of laundry. And I don't really separate my white from my darks. And, to the chagrin of mothers everywhere on this Mothers' Day, I usually only do laundry every two weeks. The result, as it formed on my bed, was a heaping mound of socks, a stack of underwear, several pairs of gym shorts and pants, and a sweatshirt or two. Among these items stood a tall column of t-shirts, probably 30 in number, and of varying colors and prints.

As I raised each shirt and folded it, I looked at its logo or message or whatever other information could be gained from it. They all spoke of so many different experiences that I have had as a student at Marietta College. I remember as a freshman walking around with shirts from my high school that said "WILDCATS" across the chest, and hearing upperclassmen say "Connor you are 18 years old, it's time to throw childish things aside" and I said "OK Bro", but they didn't really say that; they said that "Stop being a high schooler because this is college!"

So I did.

I began donning shirts from Marietta College as I collected them. I wore each with pride: a symbol of an organization, an event, a community that was shaping me.

Among my collection are at least 10 different shirts from the McDonough Leadership Program's EXCEL Workshop. These shirts, with different quotations about leadership or life, remind me about the importance of collaboration and community engagement...and that leadership is when leaders and followers work together toward a common goal, in an environment that is influenced by shared values and norms. You see? We *were* paying attention.

I have other shirts detailing my years spent with the Marietta Rowing Team. One in particular has the team crest on the front, and a quotation from rapper Kid Cudi on the back that reads: "You can come to Ohio and you can see how it feels." Although Kid Cudi's wisdom is a little lost on me, I think that any athlete who has competed for Marietta College will tell you about the pride that comes with wearing that name across our chests. Through these experiences we have learned to value personal sacrifice, camaraderie, and that the glory is in the team.

I have a t-shirt from my summer internship at H.J. Heinz Company, which I found in large part due to a Marietta College connection. This internship, like many others that students have had, provided me with the real-world experience that will prepare me for my future. With these and many other learning opportunities, this class engaged itself in ways that will bear fruit—of the loom—for years to come. Today, members of our class would don t-shirts from Chevron, MTV,

Enterprise, Target, AmeriCorps, and others, from internships they have had, or jobs that they are now taking. Marietta College, you have prepared us well for the world of work.

Many of us have letter shirts from Greek organizations that we joined, finding our brothers and sisters as sources of support, friendship and understanding. These are the most obvious sign of our connection with each other and our community, as our social organizations fundraise, volunteer and raise awareness. People are aware of the slogan “Be More, Be Greek” and membership in this community has given us more chances to better ourselves and each other. We wear these shirts to show others what ideals we have committed ourselves to.

Very recently, I have acquired a few final shirts from my time at Marietta College; the first is related to charity work. In early April, this community raised more than \$11,000 for childhood cancer research in an event organized by two members of this very class. I personally gained a St. Baldrick’s Foundation t-shirt in exchange for every inch of hair on my head.

This past week, our class engaged in an unprecedented array of games, tours, social gatherings and scavenger hunts known as Senior Week. This was commemorated with t-shirts that were maroon and turquoise, colors about as loud as the personality of Senior Week coordinator Dan Hartman. And I am sorry to report that we had to turn down an older gentleman who called in, wanting to attend the financial planning session during “Seniors Week.” This final week brought us together with our best friends, now like family, to enjoy the

community that we have forged here. There is not a day at Marietta College that we have not felt a special closeness with our classmates, our professors, even our lunch ladies. When I look at my Senior Week shirt, I will remember the great time I shared with these people, which reminded me that today is about “see you soon” instead of “goodbyes.”

There are still other shirts with other meanings from our time as students here. But when I woke up this morning, I had to decide which one I would wear today underneath my cap and gown. I elected for the first shirt that I purchased as a student: a navy blue one that says “Pio Army.” It defines the hard work that we have put into our time here, and the leadership, expertise and care of those faculty and staff that brought us here. It displays the camaraderie of our class, and for me, my incredible pride to call myself a member of this unit.

As we pack up our duffle bags and dressers today, take a look at the t-shirts that you have accumulated and the experiences that they define during your time as a Marietta Pioneer. Thank the people who made this possible for you; I know that I cannot adequately express my thanks to my family, my friends, or the faculty and staff here for making my time at Marietta College the most valuable of my life. Go home, wherever that may be, and wear your shirts proudly. May they forever speak volumes to who you were, who you are, and who you will be.

Congratulations, Marietta College Class of 2013! Thank you.