

To the Graduate

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As we both graduate, you from high school and I from college, we share the joy of embarking on new adventures. We have come so far already on our journey through education, and I cannot express how proud I am of you for all you have done thus far. Still, as your older sister, I am compelled, since I have traveled a similar path to the one you are about to traverse, to give you some insight toward what is yet to come for you. Your journey, I am certain, will be far different from my own; yet here are a few things I offer for you to know:

First, a liberal arts education provides unique opportunities to discover storehouses of learning through a great variety of sources, but not without several challenges. One common challenge throughout the liberal arts education is the inevitable confrontation of beliefs between a student and both peers and authority figures. Indeed, it is not uncommon when socializing in a lounge, cafeteria, or even in hallways, for students to find something they disagree on. Similarly, authority figures in the school, notably professors, introduce many ideologies through their lectures, assignments, and discussions that contradict some students' beliefs. In fact, in an effort to broaden one's thought patterns, often a professor will intentionally contradict a student's belief, spurring the student to think more deeply than he had on a particular subject. A student's vital asset in these confrontations is to maintain an open mind. To maintain an open mind is not to disregard all personal beliefs at the suggestion of a peer or authority figure, but rather to consider what is being proposed or claimed, examining the validity of the content and investigating the implications of the claim or proposition, and from that point to determine the value to oneself and to society that such a thought possesses. One may agree or disagree with the matter entirely, or one may agree or disagree with only certain

aspects of the content he faces. Nevertheless, these confrontations produce priceless opportunities to substantiate one's beliefs, determining what one believes and why, and to thereby build a foundation for his thought processes. My love, when you encounter opportunities such as these I have mentioned, seize them not only to strengthen your beliefs, but also to form new friendships by finding common passions! Therewith, in collaboration with an open mind, a liberal arts education may expand the horizons of your thoughts as well as of your relationships.

In addition to the challenge of transforming confrontation into a blessing, a liberal arts student also faces academic challenges accompanying the wide variety of fields he studies. Since the liberal arts education includes a myriad of subjects, a liberal arts student must learn both to transition between and to combine various styles of thought. For instance, a student may have to think analytically about concrete matters in a science lab, and in his very next class, transition to more abstract thoughts of philosophy. Along with transitioning from one thought pattern to a much different one, the student may also be required to employ scientific and abstract thought simultaneously in a class such as Biomedical Ethics. Though a difficult challenge, to be able to fluently operate in various thought patterns throughout the course of a day will provide the student with invaluable abilities for everyday life, especially in vocational areas in which one must communicate with people holding many different perspectives. Thus, instead of being intimidated by the academic challenge of a liberal arts education, I plead with you to eagerly accept the challenge knowing that your hard work will reap rewards in both the academic and the non-academic world.

In your encounter with this academic endeavor, though, you need not struggle to succeed completely on your own. Instead, you should readily seek assistance from the vast supply of help offered through a liberal arts education. You may find priceless assistance from faculty, tutors, other students, and online materials. Do not shirk this help on account of your pride. As long as you are willing to pursue various avenues of assistance, your opportunities to succeed are practically endless. An open mind, therefore, proves once more to be a key to your unlocking academic treasures.

One more thing before you go, I must suggest to you for your journey through the liberal arts that you take full advantage of the variety set before you. As I have told you already, keeping an open mind toward your challenges will allow the wealth of each opportunity to enrich your life. However, do not let the opportunities that find you be the only opportunities you face. Seek out other opportunities by seeking out variety. Dive into the wisdom that lies within various professors and a wide range of classes. Yes, you will be tempted, once you have found professors that you enjoy and understand the expectations they have of you, to stay in the comfort of their classes. I urge you, my love, do not limit yourself through these comforts! Explore classes that challenge you and professors that initiate new thinking in you. Seek out that which will stimulate excitement and enjoyment in learning. Also, do not limit yourself to socializing only with peers who are similar to you. Do find those with whom you share goals and ideals; but also find people who differ from you, those who will provide you with a new spectrum of thoughts and pleasures. Who knows what you can glean throughout your years if you seek out each day a new acquaintance from whom you can learn!

I would readily go on, as you know, to give you stories of my life during my own journey through the liberal arts. I would tell you of my laughs and tears, of my hopes and of my fears; but you will learn, without a doubt, from your own experiences, and I will look forward to our exchanging of stories then. Enjoy the adventure! And, oh yes, Happy Graduation!

With all my love,

Your sis, Rose