

Zohaib Malik '19 Commencement Speech

Thank you. Good morning everyone. For those of who are joining the class of 2019 on this momentous occasion, or for those of you who successfully dodged attending morning meetings, Hi, my name is Zohaib Malik and it is with great honor that I get to speak in front of you all today. I would like to thank everyone gathered here today. Faculty, alumni, and parents, without you none of this would be possible, and we are truly thankful for all of your contributions. Specifically, I would like to give a shoutout to my parents and siblings, who have blindly supported the decision I made four years ago to leave the greatest state in the country (New Jersey), to attend a boarding school in Northeast Ohio.

Now, when I was told by our headmaster that my class had voted me as their graduation speaker, I was genuinely excited. I got the official notice on April 17, 2019 but try as I may, I couldn't get myself to writing anything until a month later, more specifically May 24th or two days ago. It wasn't like I didn't try, I rewrote an opening twelve different times. But, for those of you who follow me on snapchat (@zohaibthezebra), or have had the privilege of having me in class, you would know that I am like a finely aged wine. I receive an assignment or topic, I let my ideas ferment, and then I stay up the night before working on it, you know to extract the ripest of the metaphoric juices.

As I sat down thinking about what I would write, I realized just how much of an impossible task it was to sum up my Reserve experience in 5-10 minutes. When you meet someone you have spent everyday with the past four years. Someone you have grown up with and has formatively shaped you into the person you are today. Someone who has left an unforgettable presence in your life. When you finally have to leave that person, you truly realize what they meant to you. You remember their quirks, the things you loved, and the things you hated. Along with the big moments, you remember the small things, because those are the ones that make the greatest memories.

In spirit of that, I wanted to take a trip down memory lane, remembering what made our Reserve experience unique. Let's start in late August 2015, or our first ever preseason. This is where we made our first friends (salutations boys) and where we started our athletic careers. Fast forward a bit to Camp Wise, the place where we tried new things like zip-lining and kosher meat, where we learned where Evan Bongers' priorities lied as he chose a football scrimmage over us (love you Boogers), where Carson Harkins "broke" his tailbone courtesy of Cal, or so we were told, where I introduced myself as "Swaggy Z" because people couldn't pronounce my name correctly (Zo-heyb), and the only place where the boarder boys would be showering that year with curtains. That's a Woodhouse joke, by the way.

I personally think that that's a perfect analogy for our freshman year. Bare bones as it gets, we were all introduced into an environment that didn't believe in curtains. We were forced to adapt through academic and experiential learning, facing the metaphoric nakedness head-on. The Class of 2019 met these challenges and solved them successfully, speaking to our will and determination but also foreshadowing the tone we were going to set over the next four years as arguably the greatest class of Reserve's history. Again, arguably.

Then Sophomore year came. Time and time again, we were told we were the forgotten class, that no one cared about the sophomores. While that is true to some extent, we made ourselves too visible to be forgotten. On the athletic fields, we developed into consistent varsity athletes (myself not included). In terms of schooling, we continued to excel in the classroom.

One of the things I believe is often overlooked about Sophomore year is the fact that it's where we as individuals grow into ourselves. This can be manifested and observed in many different fashions, whether it be Matthew Bloom discovering his love for accentuated socks, Alex Lammers deciding to grow like thirty feet, or Romir Basu still being hopeless in dressing himself, we established our unique identities. We also continued to foster friendships as new members entered our class, while also maintaining and expanding our current ones. Sophomore year might be the "lost" class, but we made sure it definitely was not forgotten.

Then we entered Junior year, labelled the most important year of our high school careers. It's where we started our college search process, where we finally understood all of the references to Mr. Ong's US History class, but most of all it is where we experienced the most change. We said goodbye to Seymour Hall and our old schedule as we knew it, while saying hello to pods. (The classroom types). The self-discovery we began a year prior was solidified in Junior year. We began to outperform the other classes, winning the class olympics and other events like Reach's candy cane drive. The biggest change, though, became how we started to carry ourselves. We finally became upperclassmen, gaining a newfound confidence through our different leadership roles. For me, it was the first year I could represent you guys as class president. What I saw was the early makings of, and I understand how cliché it will sound, future Pioneers. I'd like to think of that as poetry rather than cringeworthy.

Finally, senior year. Being seniors comes with a lot of responsibility, especially to a community that relies so heavily on and looks to us as the leaders of the school. We saw firsthand how past classes set a bad example in terms of campus involvement and we actively sought to change that. So, after four years, that is who we are. We are students, athletes, but most of all we are people. Through all of your personal stories

and small moments, you have unknowingly built the foundation for not only who you are, but also who you are going to be.

If you'd told me that I would be leaving the Lawn's Wide Sweep 8 months ago, I would have kindly responded "finally." But now as we sit here awaiting our diplomas, it has become more of a bittersweet event that I could have ever imagined. As much as I don't want to let go of Reserve, Reserve wants to let go of us so we can enter the world and show everyone what the Class of 2019 is capable of. So I end today with advice given from one of the most notable poets of our time, Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened." Reserve might not have anything left to offer us, but we have everything left to offer it. To make sure to display not only the academics we learned, but the values instilled in each and everyone of us. Excellence, compassion, and integrity. As we move our metaphoric tassels from one side to the other, I guess you can adjust your tie or your dress or something, realize that we are still representing the Green and White long after we depart from here today. Remember all the moments you had here, maybe you can learn a thing or two from them. Thank you.