

The Discomfort Zone
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Mein Chapel
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While preparing for this speech, someone asked me what messages resonated with me the most from previous chapels. Looking back, I can honestly say that I usually had to force myself to pay attention. I'm hoping this isn't the case for many of you, but I had a habit of zoning out. As a senior, I now regret not paying more attention to the people who stood where I am today. I now realize that I missed the chance to learn from others and hear about their experiences. Luckily, I have still been able to make the most of my time here by embracing each moment and engaging the challenges of being a part of a community.

I have always been a little quieter in big groups, a little more socially reserved. Considering how I am the introvert of the family, with my parents and younger sister shoving me out the door, I am so grateful for their patience and support (thank you mom for forcing me to do this Chapel Talk). Putting myself out there hasn't always felt like the safest decision. But as I reflect on my most meaningful memories at St. Andrew's, it was the times when I jumped in with both feet and fully participated. When I embraced the community, acted goofy, did something outside of my comfort zone, which was usually pretty embarrassing, those were my most enjoyable and meaningful experiences at St. Andrew's.

Some of my favorite memories come from the rowing season and the ridiculous themes we committed ourselves to during the intersquad meets. Sophomore year our boat was themed "emo." We all dressed in black, wore excessive mascara, and drew crosses and tears on our faces. After a lot of effort, we convinced our coxswain Prem Patel to put on some mascara and draw ginormous triangles on his cheeks. Although we looked absolutely crazy, it made the experience all the more memorable and entertaining.

This year we took it a step further and dressed as Smurfs, painting ourselves completely blue. After dyeing my shorts and part of our boat blue, we stamped a blue mark (literally and figuratively) in all of our memories.

These are the moments I will always remember because I was fully invested and willing to look ridiculous among friends and teammates. This is what creates a community.

That same idea applies academically, too. One of the things that makes St. Andrew's special is that the teachers here genuinely want students to grow. They're willing to meet individually and explain things in different ways and invest time into helping students improve. When you put effort into learning and ask for help, teachers here respond to that effort.

I remember my first English class at St Andrew's. I had never seen such engagement in

the reading by other students in class. Previously, at my public school, I was in a class of 20-ish kids, with one or two leading the discussion and everyone else trying to not fall asleep. I had started thinking of English as just another class you have to get through.

At St. Andrew's, we have genuinely in-depth conversations, we challenge each other's ideas, and build different perspectives. We care about understanding the text more deeply. This was a challenging shift for me, both academically and socially. However, this new level of engagement is what provided me with tremendous growth.

Another place that I unexpectedly learned from was Pell. Having never been a freshman at St Andrew's myself, I was hesitant (some might say unwilling) to be in a dorm filled with people who were new to the school. I was unsure how I would be able to support and comfort them through the changes of attending a boarding school. Now I'm so grateful that I got to be a Pell senior.

No matter the chaos of the dorm itself, whether battling for Thursday cookies, struggling with the ever overflowing lost and found, or the random but energetic Just Dance evenings, this dorm has become a home to me that I am so grateful I was able to experience.

Memories of screeching freshmen running down the halls or seniors trying to catch the freshman having sleepovers, the chaos of this dorm made it all the more of a comforting space.

I will look back fondly on my time on Pell dorm, remembering the kind, funny, and energetic freshmen I have come to know and love. Whether hosting pizza parties or doing tuck-in, each interaction with these freshmen has been rewarding and inspiring.

Dear Pelicans, I can't wait to see what the future holds for you. Remember to embrace the opportunities this campus gives, but always hold on to your fun-loving spirit.

And seniors, I look forward to the future we will build. Drawing from our experiences at St Andrew's and entering the world, I can't wait for our class reunion to learn how our lives have changed since we last met.

Ultimately, I think the greatest thing you can do at St. Andrew's is engage fully with the people, the teachers, the conversations, and especially the ridiculous moments.

Although I understand better than anyone the importance of sleep, I just read my yearbook superlative and they all talk about how I am going to lose "five years of my lifespan to" my "periodic" naps, and now I'm starting to think about finally trying to drink more coffee. But here at St. Andrew's, the moments when you lean in instead of pull away, those are the moments that will stay with you the longest. Even if it's uncomfortable, just let yourself participate. Wear ridiculous costumes, paint your body blue, be willing to look a little silly. These are the moments that end up meaning the most.

