I am so honored to be standing here before you tonight. I have been spending a lot of time thinking about what I would say here tonight in this very short three minutes. Then, as I was doing a little bit of YouTube research while preparing for a staff meeting, I came across one of David Letterman’s “Top Ten” skits. It was “The Top Ten Things that They Don’t Teach You About Teaching in College.” Suddenly, I knew what I would say. The speech that I have prepared for you tonight is “The Top Ten Things that I Learned While Studying to Be a Teacher at Marquette.” Here you go:

Number 10: Practice what you preach. At Marquette, my education teachers taught us the way they expected us to teach. They were the best role models, both as teachers and as individuals. I learned so much from them about how to live and act in ways that were true, and I will be grateful for their examples all of my life.

Number 9: No matter how tempting….don’t feed the squirrels. They warned us during orientation, but some of us tried it anyway. It wasn’t a good idea. Once they know that you have food and they can have it, they stop waiting for you to share.

Number 8: There is more than one answer to every question. The classes that I took at Marquette gave me more questions than answers. They offered me perspectives and thoughts that I might never have considered if it wasn’t for my experience there.

Number 7: It is our responsibility to take care of our communities. I love Marquette’s commitment to social justice and care for the community. I love that the university is located in downtown Milwaukee for a reason, and that the school makes service learning a critical part of the educational experience. This is part of who I am, and one of the reasons that I am very proud to be a Marquette alum.

Number 6: Prayer works. It works best with a few hours of studying, several cups of coffee, and a definite effort. But prayer does work!

Number 5: That which is most difficult to attain is also most rewarding once attained. My education at Marquette was tough. I had to work hard to earn the degree that I received, and I am very proud of that degree.

Number 4: Sometimes you learn the most important thing in the most unlikely place. I figured out that I wanted to become a teacher in my economics class. I was comfortably on my way to a career in law, when I chose to do a research project on the effect of the choice program on the Milwaukee Public Schools. Suddenly, I knew what I wanted to do. I consider it a divine revelation, because I was suddenly called with such a passion that nothing else would do. And I am here today because of that project.

Number 3: It’s okay to disagree. In my classes, there were so many people of different faiths and different beliefs. It was amazing how my teachers were able to create a space where opinions were valued and people were accepted for who they were. I can only hope that I can create these types of environments for my students and my children as they grow.

Number 2: There are angels. One time, as I was rushing to get my son off to daycare and myself off to the school that I was working at, the starter on my little pick-up truck stopped working. This had happened often enough that I knew how to pop the clutch and get the thing going. I started to push the truck across the intersection and down the hill when a stranger jumped out of his car and helped to give me a push. I got the truck started and hollered out the window, “Thanks, you’re an angel!” Since we were running late and it was my last day at the school, I took my son with me. When he told everyone the story about the truck, he said “And our truck broke down, and an angel came and helped us!” I can’t tell you how many angels helped me out in my
years at Marquette, from the people in University Ministries who gave us Soup with Substance every week, to the men in the homeless shelter who helped me when the truck broke down, again. I can tell you…there are angels!

Number 1: Gratitude. Most importantly, I learned to say ‘thank you.’ I learned this a little bit every day from my teachers, my peers, my students and my family. And tonight I want to thank you for this honor and all of the people at Marquette who gave me an experience that I can cherish and be so proud of. I cannot tell you enough how grateful I am. Thank you.