As I began thinking about what I should say to a large crowd of new Marquette parents like you all, I thought back to where I was almost exactly three years ago at my high school graduation ceremony. I was standing in front of a microphone much like this and reminiscently spoke to my fellow graduates about the innumerable memories and relationships we had shared together over the years.

Not long after my graduation day, it was time for me to leave for college. I remember being excited, yet nervous because I never thought I would find another place where I felt so comfortable and supported as I did in my hometown of Little Falls, Minnesota. Now, only 3 years after I first became a Marquette student, I stand just six months away from my graduation – and let me tell you: I certainly have proven myself wrong. The community I have experienced here at Marquette is truly one of a kind and has undoubtedly helped shape who I am today. What makes this community especially unique is the unwavering support provided by not just one person, but an entire network of individuals. And even amidst the chaos and stress which are inevitably present on any college campus, Marquette finds a way to nurture and champion its students in an amazing and steadfast manner. I would like to take this opportunity to share the experiences I have had with one person who positively influenced my Marquette experience through her compassionate and supportive mentorship.

In the transition from a high school to Marquette classroom, it can be unnerving to sit in an environment with unknown faces and surroundings while listening to an involved lecture from someone who is now known as a “professor” instead of a “teacher.” Fortunately, there are plenty of faculty members willing to reach out and offer their support and guidance to all students. I took advantage of this by using the services of my academic advisor, a professor in the department of Economics. I met Dr. Olga Yakusheva in the second semester of my freshmen year in a required advising session every Marquette student attends twice a year. In our meetings, she frequently went above and beyond her expected duties, sincerely devoting herself to my development as a student preparing to be a future business leader. I also took several of Dr. Olga’s classes and quickly became accustomed to her challenging yet accommodating teaching style. She regularly facilitated stimulating intellectual conversations which often provoked enough confusion to create a headache. Nevertheless, she always put in an extra effort to clear any uncertainties before everyone left the room. There is no doubt Dr. Olga had a knack for explaining complex economic theories in simple and practical ways, and she did so by using real life examples. I will never forget one time in particular when she used the idea of rush hour traffic to demonstrate how a free market efficiently works. Beyond the classroom walls, Dr. Olga encouraged her students to visit during office hours where she openly welcomed a wide-range of topics, varying from class-related assignments to her own economic research projects. Dr. Olga also strived to develop a personal connection with her students. She accomplished this by freely sharing stories about her educational background or young children and asking questions about her student’s social lives. My professional relationship with Dr. Olga grew over time to the point where she is now a trusted personal mentor and professional reference.
Dr. Olga is just one person at Marquette whom I know I can go to for advice on matters extending beyond my studies in the College of Business, and I know there are a multitude of other professors just like her. I truly have found a support system here at Marquette that is unlike any other, comprised of the professors, supervisors, and peers whom I have encountered and worked alongside in my involvements and experiences. The collective support I have received from every aspect of student life truly confirms Marquette is a place where we are men and women for others – not identified by our individual roles as academic advisors, departmental professionals, or student leaders, but rather as one cohesive community working for the common good of all.

So as you have heard an example of just one specific person who has supported me at Marquette, I am sure that you are eager for your own students to soon meet the people who will become their mentors, ultimately helping them to find their place in the Marquette community. I recommend you encourage your students to actively reach out and utilize the tremendous support systems at their fingertips. It is not hard to find professional members all across campus who are earnestly willing to assist in anyway they can. And by lending a hand, an ear, or a hug, each of these people truly embodies one of Marquette’s ideals: cura personalis – care for the whole person. Secondly, remind your students to not expect everything to be perfectly in place at the very beginning. While some initiative is needed for these positive relationships to form, it is essential to also remain patient and allow the sense of comfort and belonging to come to fruition on its own. And when it does, it is easy to see the waiting is all worth it.

I am so blessed to say in my short three years here, I have grown from an apprehensive freshman into a senior who surely knows my place on campus – and I honestly would not be where I am today without the unending support I have been blessed to have all around me. Marquette is so much more than 93 acres of residence halls and other buildings scattered along Wisconsin Avenue; it is home.

Many great opportunities certainly lie ahead of the thousands of new students who will step foot on this campus in just a couple of months, and it is incredibly exciting to know each of them are just around the corner from being able to call Marquette their new “home.” I can assure you they will all be welcomed by many who will help and guide them as they find their place and grow into the world of opportunities Marquette has to offer.

I wish you the best of luck as your students prepare for their move into the unbelievably supportive community Marquette is.

John D., Senior in the College of Business Administration