Student Experiences: Mentorship at Marquette

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In my three years at Marquette, I have come to be certain of at least three things.

First, college truly has been the fastest years of my life. Whether it be classes, homework, extracurricular activities, work, socializing or simply finding time to eat and sleep, the time from move-in day to graduation is going by in the blink of an eye.

Second, as incredible as it is to think about how quickly these college years go by, it is even more aweing to think about the amount of personal growth I’ve already experienced during them. From residence hall to apartment, core curriculum classes to capstones, new member to executive board, each year has brought new experiences, and each new experience has contributed to the person I am today.

Third, I’m not solely responsible for that personal growth. It’s the result of the relationships I’ve formed over the past three years, and will continue to build.

Reflecting on my time here, the most important bonds I’ve formed are those with mentors. These are the people whom have dedicated their time, care, resources and wisdom in an effort to help me become the best person I can be. Marquette is overflowing with these individuals, many of whom are with us today.

I’d like to give you all an example of just one of my mentors here … an individual who truly embodies what it means to help and guide others, and a man who played a big role in the decisions that’s allowed me to sit here and chat with each of you today.

Dr. Stephen Byers is one of the kindest individuals I have ever met. He is also one of the most eccentric. Picture everyone’s favorite grandpa. Now take whoever you have in mind and picture him enthusiastically telling stories about traveling the world, interviewing the Kennedy’s, reporting on breaking news, and in general, just loving life.

As a journalism professor and advisor for the school newspaper, The Marquette Tribune, Dr. Byers isn’t only concerned with the field of journalism, but with doing everything he can to help students leave the College of Communication ready and eager to set forth into the world.

This past year I had a decision to make that would ultimately impact my career goals. As you can imagine, a decision of this magnitude is difficult to make by oneself.

I needed a mentor.

As I spilled all of my worries, Dr. Byers listened with a smile on his face and a sparkle in his eye. When I was done speaking, he told me that if I didn’t follow my heart, I would regret it for a long time. He said that although it would be in his best interest for me to continue along my path of journalism and continue working for him as a student employee, that I needed to take a chance and explore my other options to find where my passions truly lie. He explained that college is about taking chances and trying new things in order to find happiness.

He wanted what was best for me as a person, not just as a journalist.

Here at Marquette, Dr. Byers is not the exception, but the standard. The phrase, “Cura personalis,” or, “caring for the entire person,” is something your sons and daughters will become very familiar with during their time at Marquette. In my case, Dr. Byers helped me to become more than just a journalist. He helped me become a better person. He helped me find my path and convinced me to pursue it with my entire heart.

Dr. Byers is part of my Marquette family—a family that every one of your sons and daughters is about to enter. Here, students are not simply a number. Each individual is unique and receives the support he or she needs. Just as I have my mentors, your sons and daughters will find their own. Whether it be a coach, professor, priest or employer, there will always be someone to offer a kind word of encouragement or a helping hand.

So as you say goodbye to your sons and daughters in August, don’t fear that they’ll be alone, or that they’re leaving their families behind. Instead, know that their soon-to-be Marquette family is welcoming them with open arms.