I was inspired to go to college because of my mom. During the summer of my twelfth birthday, my mom took me to her alma mater for a reunion picnic with her college classmates. The buildings were old and beautiful, and the people were so friendly. I remember sitting at the table with my mom’s friends and listening to them tell stories about how fun and exciting college was. These women had their stuff together; they were confident, beautiful, strong, and intelligent. I believed then, as I do now, that college made them the way they are today. My mom loved that I enjoyed that college visit with her and she told me that she hoped one day I would be able to share these same memories with my children.

The stories my mom shared with me about college caused me to want to experience it for myself. It also helped that she raised me with the mentality that I would attending college – when senior year rolled around, there was no question in my mind that this was the right thing for me.

Before I came to Marquette, my relationship with my mom was good, but we were not very close. In high school, she supported me doing what I loved to do, whether it was sports, clubs, music or dance. At all of my events, my mom was front and center with the camera capturing every moment. She taught me that I can do anything I put my mind to, to always spread my talents to the world, and to never forget where I came from. I respected my mom, but as a teenager, I didn’t confide in her much. I was shy to talk to my mom about certain subjects in high school, and too embarrassed to talk to her about love or other big topics.

Freshmen year of college was very tough for me. I struggled academically because I was not used to the curriculum. I was shy and under confident, and I had difficulty relating to the girls on my floor. I called my mom many times a day seeking her advice. A low point for me came a few weeks into the semester, when midterm grades were posted. I did not do well, and felt defeated. I wanted to give up, pack up my belongings, and go home for good. When I went home for Fall Break a few days later, I finally had a conversation with my mom about what had happened. This was a turning point for me. My mom and I talked for a long time, and I remember I cried in her arms. I told her my issues and problems with my classes; and admitted to her that I did not love college like I thought I would. I told her I felt like nothing; a failure. She gently brushed my hair and said something I’ll never forget - “When the waves get rough never abandoned the boat”. That simple phrase made me stop crying and I began to relax. It was then that I realized that school is supposed to be hard sometimes. College is a time for me to be challenged both academically and socially; a time when I can develop myself as a full person and a leader. When I returned back to school to finish out my first semester, I took the challenge and decided not to abandon the boat.

My mom not only inspired me to go to college, but to stay in college. Her words, her presence, and her love have always been with me on this journey. Over the past four years I began to be more involved in school, my study habits improved, and I called my mom less and less. But I never stopped relying on her advice and we are now closer than ever. The lines of communication between my mom and I have opened up greatly. I talk to my mom regularly about love, relationships and school, and my mom continues to share more and more about her college years, and give me the perspective of someone who
has been through it before. My mom is not only a parent, but a person I now call a friend. She is my main support system. And I know she will be right there front and center capturing the moment when I walk across the stage next December.

Parents, while you may be sad or nervous about your child leaving the nest in a few months, just remember that you will continue to be a very important part of their lives. If my story is any indication, there may be times in college when they need you more than ever. And at the very least, know that your student will take parts of you on their own journey at Marquette. Thank you for listening to my story today, and thanks for being the awesome parents you are.

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