

2021 College Dux Address

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Good morning awardees, staff, and guests. My name is Maddy, and I graduated from St Francis de Sales College last year. I started at St Francis in the second term of Year 10, and whilst my time here was relatively short, I have gained so many memories. From the beach walks on Year 12 retreat to the very off-topic class discussions in maths, to the last time our graduating class sung 'My Lighthouse' together, this school has given me a sense of belonging from the moment I arrived. I have been asked to speak to you all today to share my experience of my time at St Francis and give some advice to the students following in our footsteps.

My best advice for those heading into the later years of high school is to pick the subjects you enjoy. How well you do in school does not solely depend on how focussed you are and how many hours of homework you do a night; although it helps, the biggest factor is how motivated you are to do that schoolwork. And that motivation comes from genuinely enjoying what you are doing. I remember being told good luck by my peers when I told them I was doing physics, chemistry, and the two maths at the beginning of Year 12, and wondering whether I had made my final year too difficult for myself. It turned out that the most difficult subjects for me last year were the ones I didn't choose myself and therefore felt less motivated.

Although you've likely heard this many times, keeping balance in your life during Years 11 and 12 will make those years so much easier, and a lot more fun. I played soccer throughout all of high school, training twice a week and playing almost every weekend. Like many in their senior years, I also had a casual job and enjoyed time with friends and family. Whilst these activities took many hours out of my week, they made me more productive when I did study.

I cannot tell you the best way to study and keep on top of your work, because truthfully, everyone studies differently. As some may know, I was not a student who handed in assignments a week early. In fact, quite a few were submitted very close to that 11:59pm mark. I envied those who would say they submitted their assignment when I'd ask if they'd started, but eventually I had to admit to myself that I was never going to be that person. I feel I thrived under pressure. Nothing motivated me more than having only a few hours to write 800 words. However, the downside to studying like this was that I often had to say no to last-minute plans because I had an assignment due that night, or a test I hadn't studied for much the next morning. My advice would be to not follow other people's habits, but work out what study strategies work for you and go with them.

Of course, we could not have made it through the last couple years without our amazing teachers. I was very fortunate to have all my teachers be so passionate about what they did. Mrs Clements' handwritten solutions to every question in the textbook and Mrs McKinnon's perfectly organised SEQTA page supported us greatly throughout the year. Ms Fenton's hand-crafted math games and Mr Andrew's demonstrations of physics concepts involving the lobbing of many whiteboard markers made all our classes fun.

But the best support we received, and I'm sure everyone I graduated with will agree, was Mrs Mattner. Mrs Mattner gave each and every one of us immense and continuous guidance throughout our entire year. She was constantly checking in on us, even when she was stressed herself. She was an amazing teacher, and our school Mum, and I'd like to thank her so much for everything she did for us.

I should also thank my actual Mum and Dad for all their love, support, and endless hours in the car to and from soccer. I appreciate you both so much.

Due to the postponement of this assembly, I have had the opportunity to complete my first month of university, studying chemical engineering, before coming back here. So if you are planning on going to uni, I can now share a whole four weeks' worth of wisdom with you. As we're often told in school, university is much more independent, and there is rarely someone there to remind you to do your work. At least for my degree, I always have a continuous flow of study, rather than a chunk of assignments due every few weeks, so being organised from the beginning helps, as there are not many breaks throughout the term. But I've discovered that uni life is just as much social as it is academic. So speak to the person next to you in class, find the place on campus with the best coffees, or join the chicken nugget appreciation society. Just make the most of it.

Whatever Year 12 and beyond holds for you, work hard, choose to do what you enjoy, and don't take it too seriously. Thank you.