

My Final Charge

All good things must come to an end. For me, that is the end of a remarkable four years at The University of Notre Dame. My name is Brandon Hardy, a graduate in the class of 2020, and I am going to take you on my journey through Notre Dame. My road to ND was not the conventional route. I was a normal kid from East Atlanta with big dreams. It was not until my seventh-grade year when Notre Dame randomly sent me the ND Puzzle. When I first found out about the university, I was impressed. This was the first school I had ever received anything from, and it seemed NICE. Fast forward four years, I started applying early action to the school I fell in love with. I knew that it would be a challenge coming from Atlanta, from being the first in my family to attend college and having gone to ALL blacks schools my entire life, to attending Notre Dame, but I was up for the challenge. So, after applying to 23 schools and being accepted into most of them, on December 14th, 2015 at 7:59, when I received the acceptance to Notre Dame, I KNEW where I was going.

The summer of my senior year, I applied to study abroad in Rome, Italy through a Notre Dame program. It was the first time I left the country, and it was by far my most important learning experience to that point. Coming on campus that fall, I arrived with one huge suitcase, 60 bucks, no parents, no friends, no high hopes, or expectations, just a kid ready to live his life. At the conclusion of welcome weekend, I knew it was my time to make a name for myself and become an asset on campus like I had committed to doing in my admissions essays. Long story short, I did just that. I was 100% me. I did what I wanted to do, I hung out with everyone, no matter what others thought. I went to networking events; I went to the career fair my freshman year and got an internship because everyone said it was impossible. I begin with the end in mind.

I knew my purpose and what I was at school for. Grit got me through the tough times that WE ALL experience in college.

Some people may think my experience was perfect because I was always happy and having a great time, but that could not be farther from the truth. I dealt with A LOT. It was not easy. I received hate from everywhere and from all kinds of people, but I have come to realize that it comes with the territory of truly making a name for yourself. Although no one ever approached me personally to tell me how they felt about me, I heard it through all sorts of grapevines. It was a big learning experience. Here I am, a 19-year-old dealing with things most 30-year-olds don't deal with, but it made me stronger, tougher, and wiser. I knew that I had to hold my head up high, smile, and keep moving. I created the experience I wanted. I did what I wanted to do because I wanted to be 100% myself no matter the consequences. So, for the younger classes who are dreaming to make that impact and who aspire to leave their footprint on campus, I leave you with this:

- 1). Have fun. You only have 4 years; it goes by quickly. Perform at the best of your ability but please make sure you enjoy the experience. Go tailgating with your friends, go to the football games and yes, STAND FOR 3 HOURS, go to a hockey game, do something outside of what you would normally do. You may find that it is actually fun when you allow yourself to be free and enjoy life.

- 2). Be true to yourself. It's okay to be you. Trust me, I did it. No matter what people may think or say, it's okay to be you. Wear what you want to wear, think how you want to think, speak out against what you feel isn't right. At the end of the day, you are living for you and as long as you are happy with yourself, that's all that matters.

3). Make IT happen. Yes, you don't wait on someone else to fix your problems, fix your own. Be the change that you want to see in the world and make things happen. Complaining will not solve the problem.

4). Perspective is everything. Listen, everyone is different, not all people come from the same backgrounds, went to the same schools, and live the same way that we do, so please let's not judge others. Instead let's talk to them about why they do what they do, or why they feel the way they feel about a particular topic. I promise, it only makes all of us better if we all feel included and not left out or behind.

5). Begin with the end in mind. Remember why you are in College. Continue the same passion, grit, and courage that it took you to get here. Never lose it. This will help you get up in the morning when life has worn you down. Trust me, we all have been there. Don't lose sight of the end goal.

6). Lift as you climb. Some people will excel faster, quicker, and more often than others, its life. Help those around you and behind you. We are only as stronger as our community, therefore let's make sure we always help those in need. I promise you'll be better for it.

7). Get outside of your comfort zone. It's okay to hang around people who don't look like you, act like you, talk like you, think like you, and live like you. It's okay, and don't let anyone make you feel bad for it. It's college, this is the time to explore and be uncomfortable so that you can learn and be a better version of yourself. At the end of the day, we are all people, and WE ALL can learn from one another.

To the graduates of 2020, I am extremely proud of you all for getting to this point. I'm sure we can all agree that it has been at times a challenging journey, but WE MADE IT.

Congratulations. The advice above is based on my experience and my opinion; therefore, please take it with a grain of salt. My intent is to help the classes of 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and beyond to maximize 100% of their College experience. Written with love and heart. Go Irish!

BHardy,

Notre Dame Alum

Class of 2020