

Louis

WR 13100

Professor Clauss

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Speech to the Hesburgh Scholars

Situation: As a member of the Hesburgh International admission team, I am in charge of hosting the 34 top admitted international students from Latin America and Europe in order to convince them to enroll at Notre Dame. During their stay, we prepared many different events and activities for them so that they might see the best of the university. The first official organized event is a diner hosted in the new Basketball press box. At this occasion, I am asked to speak for several minutes before dessert is served, to welcome them, explain to them why they have been invited and most of all to sell them our school. The audience will be composed of the international prospect students and of their hosts, who are current Notre Dame students, but I will mainly address the visiting students, as my goal is to make them confirm to the university.

Good evening and welcome to the 2011 Hesburgh International Scholars Experience. It is with great honor that I, along with my friends and colleagues of the Hesburgh International team, welcome you all to the University of Notre Dame. I hope that your hosts are treating you well and that you have had the time to recover from your different long flights!

Let me start this evening, and this week's program, by congratulating you for your nomination as Hesburgh Scholars; you should all be extremely proud of yourselves for being selected to this unique program. I can assure you that the selection process is an extremely difficult one! However, after many hours of deliberation, you were chosen for your unique qualities that made you stand out from all other applicants. Let's say that you are the cream of the crop, the best of the best, with exceptional grades, impressive extra-curricular activities, and especially great personalities. I could go on in expressing your qualities but I would surely bore you, as I am sure each and every one of you is well aware of your own accomplishments.

Now, I imagine some of you might still be wondering why we invited you to stay with us

at Notre Dame for these few days. So, let me answer you: even if Notre Dame is one of the best, and most competitive university of the country, as well as being the world's leading Catholic college, we wanted to show you that Our Lady's university is much more than just academics. We wanted you to discover the Notre Dame family and home as we think that it is our sense of community that distinguishes us from any other colleges around the country. But before entering into the heart of our school, let me give you a brief account of the history of our program, so that you may understand why it is so unique.

As you might already know, while Notre Dame has a fabulous reputation within the United States, our university is not very well recognized internationally. This bothered some of our international alumnus who decided, about six years ago, to create an ambitious program that would forever change the school's worldwide status. Chris Lund, the head of the Latin American counsel, was so enthusiastic about the idea that he decided to personally supervise the project. He started by contacting his friend and classmate Father Jim MacDonald, who you will all meet tomorrow, in order to discuss the different ways in which they could influence the university's international reputation. After two years of organizing, and with still many unanswered questions, the International Hesburgh Scholars program, led by Ruben Jesus de Medina, was created in September 2006. The program started with only 13 students from Latin America, but to the creators' surprise and delight, the program grew to this year's outstanding number of 34 students, and to a new continent, Europe. This, of course, requires a considerable greater amount of work from our part, the team members, and from the university, not only to organize the program, but also to find the funds that enable us to invite every one of you on this all expenses paid trip. Yet, every one of us is, I assure you, very proud to welcome you to the unique Hesburgh International Scholars Experience, so that you may discover our university from the

inside. I take this moment to ask you to please make the most of the chance you have of spending these few days with us, so that when the times come for you to decide in which college you will want to spend the next four years of your lives, you might have a better understanding of what Notre Dame can offer you, and so respond positively to your admission letter!

I imagine that the first and most important reason why you took the time to apply to Notre Dame is the remarkable quality of academics the school has to offer. If that was the case, I can assure you that whatever you are interested in studying, Notre Dame will offer you opportunities only very few schools around the world could. For example, if you want to study business then try the Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business, which has been ranked first in the United States for the second consecutive year. According to Bloomberg Business Week, this is mostly due to the fact that 98% of the Mendoza students find a job within three months after graduation. But the university's brilliant education does not limit itself to the Business school, as every department on campus strives for excellence. For example, if you are more interested in studying aerospace engineering, you will be interested to note that the campus' Hessay Laboratory for Aerospace Research is home to wind tunnels internationally known for their pioneering techniques in smoke-flow visualization ("Faculty"). Or let's say you are more interested in mechanical engineering; well, less than five years ago, the University opened the new Jordan Hall of Science, which is a \$70 million facility "devoted solely to undergraduate education" ("Resources"). I could find many more examples to illustrate the many opportunities and the quality of the education given here at Notre Dame, but the fact that Our Lady's university is ranked among the top 25 American colleges in almost every survey says it all ("Rankings").

Another asset that contributes to making Notre Dame's academics so excellent is the

number of classes offered on campus. Indeed, when the time comes for you to choose your schedule, you will most certainly spend hours determining which class you will want to take. At least in my case, I remember going through the different thousands of classes I could choose from, and not being able to make my mind up. As a political science and philosophy major, I had the idea that there would only be a couple of classes that would actually interest me: I was so wrong. After a quick first look, I had chosen fourteen classes, but I could only apply to five: should I take the International organization or the International political economy class, the American Revolution or the American Civil war class, the American Constitution or the EU political organization class? You get the picture! How was I to decide between so many choices? These are just a couple of examples that show you how incredible the Notre Dame academics are, and how by coming here, you will receive one of the most challenging, yet stimulating education in the subjects that best fits you.

However, if Notre Dame is academically so excellent it is not only due to the infinite opportunities you will have while studying here, but also thanks to the amazing teaching staff present on campus. First of all, unlike many other institutions, 90% of the classes you will take at Notre Dame will be given by actual professors, thus leaving only 10% of them given by their assistant. This is a primary concern for the university, as it desires you to learn first hand from scholars “who help shape common thought” (“Teaching”). Furthermore, these professors are not here to force knowledge unto you, but instead they try to help you understand, and make yours what you are studying so that you might integrate the information for your future life. For instance, last semester I was really struggling with my history seminar class because we had to write a paper every two weeks and my English was still very rusty. Well, after having received two disappointing grades, I went to see the teacher who spent almost an hour and a half

explaining to me what I was doing wrong. With his aid and the help of the fantastic writing center, provided for all freshmen, I ended the semester with an A in that class! Furthermore, I am convinced that any one of my professors would have done the same thing to help me. This shows you how much professors do care about their students, and how much they prefer to see you succeed instead of fail.

Yet, even if we do have extraordinary academics here at the university, there are plenty of other excellent Universities around the country; although as I mentioned before, our business school is ranked the number one in the nation! Just saying. But trust me, what distinguishes Our Lady's university from all other around the country is the Notre Dame family. Indeed, if you decide to pursue your undergraduate here at Notre Dame, you will experience what it is like to live with students that don't consider themselves as friends, classmates, or even study partners but as family. Just a few months back, during my first class as a freshman in Notre Dame, each student had to introduce himself to the other 13 classmates; as you would imagine I said: "Hi, my name is Louis, and I'm from Belgium." Well, this was not what the others did; instead the next student stood up and said: "Hi my name is Stan, and I'm from Alumni Hall". Having only been here for a couple of days, and also being a fellow Alumni Dawg (nickname given to Alumni men), I couldn't believe a student could so quickly and confidently identify himself to his dormitory. On the way back from that class I went up to him to try and understand why he had done so. He looked at me puzzled and told me that because he would spend the next four years in his dorm, it would become his home on campus, and thus his roommates would become his family. I was very surprised at first, but I have to admit that he was right; my roommates have become like brothers to me. We even go out together each month to what we call our 'family diners.' In addition, the Notre Dame family exceeds well beyond your four years of studies here

on campus. Let me give you an example, during thanksgiving break, my roommate Tom and myself went to visit New York. We were just about to walk out of a restaurant when what appeared to be a young businessman introduced himself to Tom: “Hey, I saw your ND t-shirt, what dorm are you in?” And just like that, we started a twenty minute long conversation over how we were enjoying Notre Dame so far. The man in question worked on Wall Street, and he told us that if we ever needed help to find either an internship or a job we had to contact him. Unfortunately I lost his card, but these examples illustrate very well how important and unique the Notre Dame sense of community is to both current and past students: once you join us you become part of our family.

So Notre Dame has excellent academics and an unmatched sense of community, but why would you ever think about going to South Bend, Indiana? I am not going to lie; South Bend is no metropolis. But this small Midwestern town is the home to our family, and as you have seen during your tour, the campus is magnificent, so much so that Notre Dame attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year who come to admire the amazing surroundings in which we students are so lucky to live in (“Campus”). I have to admit that every time the sun comes out, I try to take the time to walk around the lakes, and to stop by the Grotto: it is so relaxing. The golden dome, the basilica, the different statues, and Touchdown Jesus have become parts of our daily lives, helping us forge the famous Notre Dame family. Furthermore, South Bend is not completely isolated, as it is only two hours away from Chicago, one of the world’s best cities. So, do not worry about leaving the different metropolises in which you currently live because South Bend is home to Notre Dame, and Notre Dame is where I found my second family!

Finally, in addition to the excellent education and family Notre Dame promises you if you decide to enroll to our school, you will find here a great place of faith and prayer. This is very important because, just as Father Patrick Peyton, a former Holy Cross priest who was ordained in our Basilica, used to say: a “family that prays together stays together.” This life of faith is an essential component of our school: since its creation, Notre Dame’s mission has been to be “at the center of Catholic intellectual life—to be a bellwether institution in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, while remaining guided and elevated by the moral imperatives of the Catholic faith” (“Faith”). This strong religious commitment is fulfilled on campus in many ways, especially thanks to the presence of the Holy Cross Community, which allows us never to forget the existing link between faith and reason. I have to admit that the Alumni Sunday dorm masses are some of the best religious services I have ever been to. Every week, the Alumni Hall chapel fills up with both ‘hallmates’ and friends who unite together, just like a family would, to pray and thank the Lord. But do not worry if you are not Catholic, or even a non-believer, because the main goal of the school is not to form thoughtless God fearing men, but instead, to form students who might one day become a force for good in the world. Furthermore, I still have not heard any complaints about religious intolerance or Catholic ‘peer-pressuring’ at Notre Dame. This being said, I think that this community of faith strengthens our university, and helps it become the marvelous college it is.

I hope that I was able to give you, through this welcoming speech, an accurate portrait of what the University of Notre Dame is really like. As you can see this is a great school, which will provide you with countless academic opportunities to shine both on campus and in the world. But, as we discussed, Notre Dame is much more than just a school, much more than just academics; it is a place where you feel at home, it is a place where you will meet your second

family. Leaving home to study abroad is never an easy thing to do, especially when English is not your first language, but as you saw through my own experience, I would never, and I really mean it, never replace my experience at this great University of ours because at the end of the day, Notre Dame is home to me. From your teachers, who would do everything they can to help you succeed, to the lady that works in library and helps you find that book that you've been searching for, every individual on campus contributes to making your Notre Dame experience unforgettable. And remember, it is not your location, but rather the people you are with that will forge the next four years of your lives. However, I can see that you are all looking at the desserts with envy, so let me finish by reaffirming how honored we are by your presence here with us tonight, and I, along with the other members of the Hesburgh International team, hope that you will have fun during your stay, but most of all, that we might see you here next August as Notre Dame freshmen!

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