



## Loyola College

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## 2023 College Dux Address to the School Community

***The following speech was delivered by the 2023 Loyola College Dux – Pio Abi Raad – at the school's Opening College Assembly on Thursday, 8 February 2023.***

Good Afternoon Ms. Leutchford, Staff, and Students,

My journey at Loyola College over the past 2 years was something I could never have anticipated. The people I met, the adversity I overcame, and the growth I experienced while at this school changed my life completely.

I was just like everyone of you. A young naive student and yet another face in the college who wasn't entirely sure year after year where I was headed. I still remember watching the Dux speech for the first time in Year 10, very confused about what a Dux was and how the Dux that year and most years seemed to be a Captain of the school. On top of that, coming back to Australia after growing up in Abu Dhabi meant my senior years ran a bit differently to most of you, adjusting to the 'Aussie' curriculum whether it was making American spelling mistakes in English class, or picking up how to avoid Mr. Simpson's efforts to convert me into a Collingwood fan.

At the time everything in my life was changing so fast. But one thing kept me going. Discovering how kind, compassionate, and welcoming the people at Loyola College were. The people I met at this school completely changed my life from our first interactions. All the laughs, good times shared at Recess and Lunch and newfound friends I made taught me just how much fun it was to be part of Loyola and really pushed me to be outgoing come Year 12.

I was just like you. Except, the people that believed in me made me the person standing before you today. All the friends, family, loved ones, and support I surrounded myself with became my driving force to achieve well. It no longer became just about pleasing me, I saw every opportunity as a way of making them proud. They made all the difference in the habits and mindset I carried with me throughout the year. So now they deserve their claim to fame.

Shoutout to Massimo and Jason for always making sure I was on track with my workload in all the classes we shared and sticking with me every period of the day. Shoutout to Dante for every friendly competition and for convincing me I could still be the Dux while we would work at Woolies day and night. Shoutout to Maddy for always checking up on me, sending the positivity, and helping me avoid the burnout. Shoutout to George for always bringing humour and genuinely backing my Dux candidacy way before I did.

Shoutout to my best friend Alvin for always spending countless long nights calling over everything and being my inspiration to work and perform at my best. Shoutout to Giulia, for always being by my side going through everything Year 12 had to throw at us. Thanks for all the study sessions and a special Happy 18th Birthday to you! And last but not least, shoutout to all the boys sitting way at the back, and yes as promised you each get a shoutout!

To:

Oliver  
Thomas  
George  
Dimi  
Noah  
Elias  
Elijah  
Dylan  
Michael  
Ben  
Phoebe  
Alana  
and Alessia

Thanks for every memory we made in Year 12 and making sure I always took time off from working hard to kick back.

So why the long list shoutouts of you may ask? Because in my eyes, there is no Dux without each and every single person.

You see, I was just like you until I met the people I cherish to be my second family.

With this comes my first point:

Choose your surroundings carefully and stay with people who genuinely want to see you blossom into the best version of yourself. There were numerous times where I felt like giving up and throwing the towel in, but seeing the devotion and love my friends attributed to my goals really kept me going.

Now you I can't go through this speech without giving each one my teachers their flowers.

To Mr. Garzia, thanks for always offering a helping hand on hard math problems and watching the Warriors games with me. To Mr. 'V Lam', thank you for believing in my potential well before even I could see it and for your effort to building the renowned Maths Magis Club.

To Mr. Simpson, thank you for brightening my mornings with Mentor everyday, and for bringing me in when I first arrived. And as Wes always preached – 'Up the Blues!'

To Mrs. George, thank you for being my one and only 'Bio Mum', pushing me to teach those around me and making sure I always put 110% into all my work.

To Mrs. Hartigan, thank you for sparking my diligent work ethic by always keeping me and the class on our toes, both academically and literally with all our room changes. But seriously, I'm so grateful for every time you made me see the 'Messi-like' potential I had in the Methods cohort.

To Mrs. Murray, thank you for making all my far-fetched aspirations achievable, you always reassured me and pushed me to exceed beyond the limits. With your help, Accounting became second-nature to me.

To Ms. Brudy, thank you for inspiring me to explore in the uncomfortable and discover my own craft. Your kindness in allowing students to meet with you at every free time you had made all the difference in mine – and our class's success in cementing your first year legacy here as an English Teacher.

To Mrs. Stylli, thank you for helping me see my own potential. Though I never had a favourite Teacher the same way you'd never pick your favourite between us, I always looked forward to Chemistry the most. You perfectly mixed learning and laughter in class, yet always found ways to challenge me with new concepts. Because of you, I became genuinely passionate in the Chemistry I was learning, which was the key to my success.

See I was just like you all, until I finally appreciated the unconditional support of my teachers and mentors.

This gets me to my second point:

If school is like a team sport listening to your coaches is pivotal to doing well.

Your teachers want what's best for you, so getting told to work ahead of schedule every now and then is just them pushing you to succeed even more. While it may seem tedious in the moment, and trust me I speak from personal experiences, staying persistent the same way you'd show up to practice every week is a big factor in performing once the big assessments arrive and avoiding the excuses. As Mrs Hartigan loved to say, the aim is

to train the way you play, find routines that fit you, start off strong, and remember it's not game day it's just training. You come to realize that all those scary deadlines become a lot more manageable because of your routines.

But before I go, I have to end with my biggest thank you of all. My family.

Thanks to my Teta, to Amto, to Ann Marie, Maria and to all my cousins and family back in Lebanon. Thanks to my old friends back in Abu Dhabi too. Now, onto my immediate family:

Even though he couldn't make it today, I have to begin by thanking my Dad, thanks for all your hard work and sacrifices, thanks for being the example I looked up to, and for listening to any ideas or questions I had. Thanks for never setting expectations on me and letting me learn with my own my two wings. It's because you I now fly so high.

To Mum, thank you for all your time and commitment to making sure I was always healthy and happy. You were the inspiration to all my hard work, and the person I wanted to share this with most. You are my pride and joy forever.

To Gab my older brother, thank you for always showing up for me. You are my rock. Whether it was picking me up after late night parties or finding ways to take my mind off school with random trips on the weekends, your one-of-a-kind personality always kept me smiling.

And last but definitely not least,

To Joseph,

My other half and genuine best friend. Thanks for the last 18 years. No one else could've pushed me and supported me through this feat other than you. It's because of you I now stand here celebrating

both of our accomplishments, because in my eyes, you are just as much the Dux as I am. Moving halfway across the world was a breeze because I had you by my side always.

See I was just like all of you. But now I walk away with a few more insights on the journey you've yet to embark on.

With that comes my third and final point:

Anyone can become the Dux. But in my eyes, it takes one key thing. Above what everyone else thinks, **you have to believe in yourself**, and **you have to want it**. I was just like you, until the day I realised the only thing holding me back from achieving all my goals was me. I was no School Captain and didn't have any [Unit] 3/4s supporting me. Starting the year, the odds were stacked against me.

Yet now I stand in front of you, **triumphant** with no doubt whatsoever that if you truly put your mind to something and attack it with full faith in yourself, no one can stop you.

Thank you.