

The Gates

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The College Essay: Rough Cuts and Scrapped Drafts

Olivia Friess '22

Second semester: every senior's dream. Not because it's the commencement of the senior slide, but because the year's main stressor is finally coming to a close: *college application season*. Perhaps the hardest, most time-consuming part of this whole ordeal was not the seemingly endless forms or perfecting the SAT, but the dreaded Common App Essay. How *does* one sum up her personality, life achievements, creativity, and journey of growth in a meager 650 words? I asked some current seniors—now veterans of this craft—about some of their original essay ideas that resulted in edits, rewrites, or were completely cut altogether.

"I wanted to compare my belief in Justin Bieber to God," one senior confides in *The Gates*. I legitimately was going to talk about being a "belieber" and how just like my faith, my loyalty to JB has had rough patches, like when he broke up with Selena, but how this ultimately made my faith stronger." I knew that the so-called "Bieber Fever" spread throughout the Main Line in September of 2021, but I had no idea that it infected the college admissions process, too! Points for creativity though, I do not think colleges have seen that take on a role-model essay yet!

On the topic of role models, another senior recalls, "I was going to write about Robert Downey Jr. and how his different acting roles have resonated with me for my college essay." This topic, though interesting, can potentially be a slippery slope that can result in either a well-written essay on inspiration...or 650 words of fan-girling. He is Iron Man, after all, so who can really judge? (Continued on p. 2)



Pajama Day

Ashley Kelly '26

On December 10, 2021, Notre Dame participated in a schoolwide pajama day. The students were asked to bring in donations and all of the proceeds went to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. This idea stemmed from our Sunflowers and Smiles Club here at ND! Thanks to our generous students and faculty, we were able to raise over \$3,000 dollars for CHOP. The Sunflowers and Smiles Club also hosted a bake sale during school where students could buy tasty treats, and all of those proceeds went to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia as well. Thank you to all who donated!



Keep your Eye on ND Hi-Q

Ava Pastore '22

If you haven't already heard, the ND Hi-Q team has been making tremendous strides this season! With the coaching of Dr. DaCrima and Dr. Califf, along with the team's collective talent, ND Hi-Q has been making excellent progress. Delaware County Hi-Q, the oldest continuous academic quiz competition in the country, involves different schools competing to achieve the highest composite score. I spoke to a member of ND Hi-Q, Kyleigh Calvert, who gave me more insight on the team. Kyleigh detailed how the team prepares for their meets, which occur three times per regular season. She says, "There are many different categories that we are quizzed on. At meetings, we divide into who will focus on which category, and each member studies for this assigned category." Kyleigh also discussed the commitment that Hi-Q requires, and how many students aren't aware of the work that is put into this club behind the scenes. ND Hi-Q meets on Tuesdays during community time, Wednesday mornings before school, and Sunday nights.

I was very interested to learn more about this impressive group of students, especially after enjoying the recent home meet. This meet was certainly tense, with the competition coming down to the final question. The audience held onto hope as the winner was revealed. With crossed fingers and awaited applause, the student body rejoiced as ND was announced the winner! Kyleigh says, "you could feel the high spirits in the air. It's so exciting to show the community your hard work." I could certainly feel the energy in the room that day as ND left Cuvilly Gym with a win. This season has been very impressive for ND Hi-Q as their high scores this season have given them the opportunity to compete in the semi-finals. (Continued on p. 2)

ND Dancers: All the Right Moves

Molly McFillin '22

Twice a year, ND dance classes put on a performance showcasing what they have learned that semester. There is usually a night show for parents and friends and a preview



(Continued on p. 2)

The Christmas Concert

Charlotte Lignowski '22

On December 9, 2022, Notre Dame held its annual Christmas concert. Performances included Mrs. Miller's sixth grade chorus class as well as the Upper and Middle School Women's Chorales which she directs. Upper School Women's Chorale had the pleasure of welcoming the Malvern Men's Chorus to the stage. The audience also enjoyed performances by the Upper and Middle School Ensembles directed by Mr. Grayberg. The night as a whole was full of wonderful music, plenty of Christmas cheer, and was a great start to the Christmas season. Congratulations to all those who performed and special thanks to everyone who worked so hard behind the scenes to ensure a successful concert.



Sharing Our Own Dreams on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Marisa McKaige '24

On Tuesday, January 18, during community time, ND students celebrated the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Much like ours, schools from all around the nation educate their students about ways to commemorate the great work Dr. King achieved. Schools like ND put in the work to make sure we all appreciate Dr. King and reflect on how we can advance as a sisterhood and community. When talking to Mrs. Tina Williams, head of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office, I asked what Martin Luther King, Jr. Day means to her at Notre Dame. She showed me some of the storyboards students had created following our homeroom viewing of Amanda Gorman's "New Day's Lyric," which included depictions of traveling, being productive, and other common goals students share, crossing the barrier of color lines and proving how we are all more similar than we are unlike.

Mrs. Williams also discussed the many virtues of our much beloved Notre Dame sisterhood when I asked her how we have advanced as a community regarding topics like diversity and inclusion. She answered proudly, reflecting on the many recent changes in our school. For example, every month we now honor different cultures, such as Indigenous Peoples (November), Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month (September), Arab American Heritage Month (April), and of course, Black History Month (February) among others. Mrs. Williams also gratefully shouted out our amazing Head of School, Dr. Hotchkiss, who according to Williams, has been very committed to changing the status quo here at Notre Dame. From backing many programs like the newly instated Black Student Union to requiring teachers to participate in SAGE Wellness workshops, she ensures that all faculty members and students alike are educated and feel prepared to navigate such topics regarding race and inclusion. Mrs. Williams also explained to me how she wants students to know that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program also focuses on making sure all girls at Notre Dame are knowledgeable enough to make good decisions after they leave the gates. Relevant to that point, students over 18 now have the opportunity to register to vote at ND! Stamps and voting registration forms are available outside of Mrs. Williams' office!

ND's Gotta Dance (Continued from p. 1)

during the school day for their peers and teachers to watch. It's an event that everyone looks forward to, not just because the dances are great and entertaining to watch, but also because seeing your own friends performing is something everybody enjoys! That's especially true this year, since all the dancers were finally able to take the stage following a long time away due to the aftermath of Covid. This was Dance Director Mrs. Devenney's favorite aspect of putting together the show this year. And after speaking to her some more, we learned what goes into putting on these performances and how much everyone prepares for them. The dance companies begin learning their choreography and preparing all the way back in August, and the dance classes begin learning their



choreography around November, after months of learning about different dance styles and moves included in them. As for costumes and music, Mrs. Devenney is always planning those and thinking of what she can create next! However, as Mrs. Devenney says and everyone agrees, after seeing what an amazing show it was this time, having it being over seems like such a letdown! Now we have to wait for next semester's show! But don't worry, and mark it in your calendars: the next two dance performances will be April 28 and 29!

The College Essay (Continued from p. 1)

Aside from the "role-model essay," another classic outline is the ever-so-timeless (for better or for worse) "Recipe for a ____" essay. One senior decided to revamp this formula in a fresh, yet personal way by attempting to relate her five-step skin care routine to various coming-of-age moments throughout her life, only to realize partway through that you can only have so many of these moments by age seventeen. Perhaps this would be better put to use as a creative introduction to her eventual memoir titled "5 Steps to a Successful Life and a Flawless Complexion."

In the college admissions process, honesty is key...but it is possible to be a bit *too* honest. "I literally wrote about how I wasn't great at putting ideas into words and was a terrible procrastinator...Junior year me was being too risky with essay topics that made me not sound so great," recalled one senior. Self-awareness is a good quality to have, but this may not be the best place to display it. "...needless to say [the] essay died by the intro," she concluded. In this case, that quality of self-awareness came to her aid! To the likely now-anxious juniors reading this, this is all just part of the process. It happened to all of us just as it will likely happen to all of you, so do not worry! I went through eight—yes, eight—full rewrites, only to circle back to my original topic. The process is different for everyone, and I am sure that you, too, will brainstorm some quite unusual ideas before you find your flow.

Eye on Hi-Q (Continued from p. 1)

In addition to this exciting possibility, Kyleigh shared another memorable moment for ND Hi-Q. The team's goal this year was to break 100 points with their three regular-season meets combined. Last week, they accomplished this feat. Kyleigh says, "Even though we came in second to Ridley, we scored 36 points today, making it to a total score of 107." This was a proud moment for ND Hi-Q, and I am excited to see where the rest of the season takes the team.

These Athletes are Off to College!

Madison Frank '22

On November 12, the Notre Dame community gathered to celebrate the seven seniors who will be continuing their athletic and academic careers at the collegiate level. With National Signing Day taking place November 10, Notre Dame's Fall College Commitment Ceremony recognized the athletes' commitment and/or signing to their future university. ND coaches, athletic director Mr. Davey, and Head of School Dr. Hotchkiss spoke to honor the hard work each girl has put into her sport and her classes to reach this accomplishment.



All seven of the seniors celebrated at the ceremony are continuing their respective sports at the Division 1 level. For swimming, Ashley Kolessar is committed to University of California, Los Angeles, where she will swim in the PAC-12 conference, and Natalie Stuart will continue her swimming career at University of Richmond, where she will compete in the Atlantic 10 Conference. Four seniors will play field hockey in college: Caroline Doyle is committed to play field hockey at St. Louis University, where she will play in the Atlantic 10 Conference; Madison Frank is committed to Georgetown University, where she will compete in the Big East Conference; Evelyn O'Neill, committed to Villanova University, will also play in the Big East Conference, and Emma Steel is committed to Lehigh University, where she plays in the Patriot League. Maeve McErlane will continue her academic and basketball career in the Big East Conference with her commitment to DePaul University.

A second college commitment ceremony may take place in the spring. Congratulations to these seven student athletes!

**Have an idea for an article you'd like to see in *The Gates*?
Have an amazing photo or cartoon you want to share?
Email the editors at thegates@ndapa.org**

Tribute to Mrs. Leah Bowers

Jordyn Williams '22

On January 16, Physical Education and Health teacher and Notre Dame Cross Country and Track and Field Coach, Leah Bowers passed away after an extended battle with cancer. Leah was a beloved



and admired member of the Notre Dame Community and was known for her gentle and kind spirit especially towards her students. As a Physical Education and Health teacher, Mrs. Bowers always emphasized the importance of loving ourselves, embracing who we are, and developing personal confidence which is incredibly important for young female students. Outside of the classroom.

Mrs. Bowers was an integral part in establishing the loving, encouraging, and positive environment of the Notre Dame Cross Country and Track and Field teams.

Senior Cara Stevenson (co-captain of the cross-country team) reflects on what she appreciated the most about her beloved coach: "Mrs. Bowers was a fundamental part of our team. Her ability to push forward during her treatment inspired everyone and created a bond that can never be broken. She cared about every single person on our team, and her selfless, loving personality will live on in all of us." Mrs. Bowers will forever be remembered in our hearts and the ND community is grateful to have known her, befriended her, and learned from her.

Maeve McErlane joins the 1000-point Club

Molly Hughes, '22



On January 25, 2022, senior basketball star Maeve McErlane joined the 1,000 point club in the varsity team's win against Episcopal Academy. An impressive accomplishment, joining the 1,000 point club means Maeve's name will be added to the banner in Aimee Willard and accompany the

names of past ND basketball standouts. Maeve will attend DePaul University next year to continue her basketball career. Good luck to Maeve and the rest of the ND basketball team for the remainder of their season!

Sports Insider: Paddle Tennis

Maureen Maguire '22

On Wednesday, January 6, ND's Senior paddle club played in a home match against Conestoga. As a member of the paddle club myself, my partner and I were jittery waiting for our turn to step up to the net while we watched many of our teammates struggle on the courts. We needed to win so that I had at least one victory to write about! Spoiler alert: we did not win, nor did most of the team. I personally blame the 25 degree weather. But, we played with laughter, smiles on our faces and encouragement from our teammates, coaches Steve and Travis, and even our teachers who came to support the paddle team. At the end of the day our team had one victory from our No. 1-ranked doubles team, Maggie Krein and Kelly McGlinn, with an intense 6-4 ending score. I can confidently say the match was a fun battle with good effort all around, cute boys to play against, the best wings and pizza in town, and memories of our senior year that we will never forget. Seems like a victory to me!



Retreating at ND

Sydney Dalton '23

On Monday, January 24, the junior class attended a retreat at the Malvern Retreat House. This retreat was only the second that the junior class was able to attend, as Covid has been derailing the retreat process, but in a way, that makes this event more special. The junior class discussed discernment and learned more about decision-making within their faith. ND retreats enable the students to take time—both together and separate—to reflect on their faith, becoming closer to one another in the process. Like community prayer and campus liturgies, retreats are a critical part of spiritual growth, encouraging students to stay in touch with their faith, themselves, and each other.

Through each of the retreats, students learn about the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame and how we can integrate that mission into our own lives. Students in the Lower School participate in a yearly on-campus retreat connected to their religion class curriculum. They spend a faith-filled day considering how they can spread the Gospel message to develop a deeper relationship. Throughout their day they reflect on themselves, others and God by journaling and attending a liturgy. In the Upper School, ND retreats look a bit different. They are held off campus, generally at the Malvern Retreat House, where students reflect on their experiences with their faith and how they can develop a deeper relationship with God. Students are encouraged to open up and share their journeys of faith through team building activities and small group discussions. As students start to reach the end of their time at ND (junior and senior class) they participate in an ND tradition called Kairos. Kairos is a special retreat where students spend a few days off campus to reflect on their relationship with God and how they have grown and matured in their faith over the years. Retreats at ND provide a way for students to evaluate every year how far they have come in their faith journey.



Cradles to Crayons Giving Factory

Cameron Landers, '24

Approximately one in four Philadelphians live in poverty, leaving nearly 130,000 children affected. With the highest poverty rate among the nation's ten largest cities, Philadelphia is in desperate need of essential items. On Saturday January 22, Ms. Tully invited Upper School students to participate in service at the Cradles to Crayons Giving Factory, a non-profit organization that collects and distributes children's essentials to accommodate basic needs. Upon arrival, students decorated cards, leaving heartfelt messages welcoming children back to school, and encouraging them to embrace learning. The Volunteer Leader then gave a tour of the warehouse, explaining the significance of each donation item. In the shoe section, she shared a story highlighting the impact this organization has on children and their mental health. She said, "Studies have shown that giving children a low quality item is almost as bad as giving them nothing at all."

At Cradles to Crayons, quality means dignity, which means that the donation items cannot be quality compromised in any way. From the large piles of worn down shoes, it was evident that many people do not consider this when donating. The students spent the next three hours scrubbing and inspecting, ensuring that children will receive high quality shoes that are not dirty, ripped, or stained.



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