

Arts & Science 30th Anniversary Remarks, 24 Sept. 2011
Mary Koziol (Class of 2011)

It's very exciting to be here tonight. In seeing so many faces, ranging from first year students to Alumni from the inaugural Arts & Science cohort, I cannot help but to be appreciative of the resiliency of the Arts & Science community. I use the word resilient quite intentionally. Something that is resilient is defined as being able to return to its original form or position after being compressed, or stretched.

After everything I've seen this weekend, it's evident that despite the forces the program has had to contend with over the years, our essential mission and reason for being remains intact, and our original form preserved.

What makes our community so resilient is that the relationships we form while in the program are based on much more than sharing a university and a set of classes. Friendship is fostered by, yes, a shared experience, but also through intellectual conversation and debate, shared interests and a love of learning.

I didn't fully understand the strength of the Arts & Science community until I prematurely, but of my own volition, stepped out of the womb and into the turbulent seas of student politics. And wow, what a difference. The critical element was still there (though I mean critical in perhaps a different sense), but without the supportive nature of Arts & Science. I'm referring of course to my year with the MSU – and while I immensely enjoyed the experience of working with people with beliefs and values so drastically different than my own, and attempting to face challenges on a macro level, when I felt as if I couldn't take anymore, I'd always go running back to the Arts & science community, ready to jump head first into its accepting and supportive midst.

I'm sure many of us have had similar experiences. And while I hope that many have gone on to work and live in communities that are just as intellectually challenging, just as supportive as what we experienced in Arts & Science, many of us have not. And what I wonder is, how do we bring the values of Arts & Science with us beyond our undergrads? How do we recreate environments where people are encouraged to thrive, but not at the expense of others? For despite the fact that we live in this individualistic society, in our time here we realize how rewarding and reassuring a true sense of community can be, and how we are bettered by being a part of it.

So for now, I encourage everyone to revel in the beauty of this weekend, of this night, in the joys of being part of such a resilient community. I want to personally thank everyone who has made this program my home over the past 5 years, but even more so, thanks to everyone who will ensure that Arts & Science continues to be the home that we can perpetually return to for hope and inspiration; when the storm outside becomes too difficult to contend with, that we can always come back to one another.