

(Thank you Ms Janes) Good Afternoon Mr Couani, distinguished guests, teachers, parents and fellow peers, I am humbled and privileged to be addressing you, representing the HSC Class of 2020 of this wonderful college. Through its liberating education and inclusive community, St Pius X College has granted me a uniquely spiritual and rewarding journey, and has provided a motivating environment for me to achieve my best. Congratulations to the myriad of academic achievements to all award recipients today, especially the recent graduates, truly a credit to the staff and their leadership. Today I stand in front of you entirely grateful, and to offer key pieces of advice I learnt during my final year to hopefully motivate you in your endeavours.

After my last day, it granted me the opportunity to reflect on my past 7 years at this college, and I am glad to achieve this milestone with my peers, making college life here so memorable. Congratulations on your results Class of 2020, in such a year of economic, social emotional turmoil we have achieved this landmark, so enjoy the years ahead and I cannot wait to witness the impending success that each of you will achieve, with the foundation laid upon us from St Pius X College.

As well as acknowledging those up on stage today I would like to address those narrowly missing out, and offer some advice. I still remember watching the past 5 DUX speeches, wondering how I could get myself there and achieve to my highest potential. Upon reflection I realised there were 3 vital components to my success in my final year, and through these steps I became self-motivated, self-disciplined and resilient, key ingredients to, "take advantage of the opportunity of a lifetime in the lifetime of the opportunity".

My first bit of advice is to find your 'why', your purpose, a particular goal where you won't stop till you achieve, allowing you to stay grounded and driven. For example, it was always my goal to study a Bachelor of Commerce at Sydney University, and throughout the year this goal encouraged me to perfect my notes, tweak my essays, and do paper after paper. Engulfed in work, I realised Year 12 and in fact many other endeavours can be relatively simple for those reactive and not proactive, those wanting to be average and just get by. Despite that being an entirely personal decision, those driven and wanting to improve their work ethic and challenge themselves, will always be rewarded in striving to achieve their goals, and witness growth of their character. Through the vigorous HSC examinations, I believe this is one of the first tests of one's attitude and discipline, some people may struggle, others will flourish and have a significant head start in their future pathways, but there will always be opportunities later. In the words of Winston Churchill, "the pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, and the optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty", so adopt a positive lens and make the necessary sacrifices to achieve your goals. I firmly believe that one's expectations can never exceed their work ethic, as luck comes and goes, but consistency always triumphs.

This brings me onto my next tip, and that is to saturate yourself in learning and develop a genuine interest. For example, during the holidays there would be group run sessions for economics, allowing us to apply perplexing concepts in class into conversation, I also encourage receiving constant feedback from teachers and doing every practice paper you can find. Recognise the importance of teamwork and cooperation, because even though you

are competing for ranks, I certainly realised that a supportive environment can make a significant impact. Recognise where you are and become willing to change, whether it be formulating new exam strategies to perfect short answer responses, or use acronyms to memorise a subject's syllabus. Having said this, your mind is a powerful tool, and needs rest, where incorporating balance will also allow you to excel. Looking after your body through sport, meditation or even playing an instrument, can improve your general health and well-being, which are pivotal in optimal academic functioning.

My last bit of advice is to develop a program that works for you because structuring your days can improve your time management and organisation, which were pivotal factors in achieving my ATAR. Going online granted me the opportunity to step back and organise myself, where incorporating a study timetable was essential in making up my days, and through this my confidence started to build and my results improved. Using these tips I encourage you to work twice as hard as the person next to you, and through a growth mindset, chop and change your strategies, and make sure when it's all over and you look back that you know you put 110% into everything.

Now I would like to thank all the teachers of St Pius X College, but there are a few mentions I would like to highlight.

Mr Listo, for the several years of constant engagement and an array of resources to improve my writing. Through always colouring my practice essays in his infamous red ink, I am eternally grateful for the persistent effort he put into our English class both online and in the classroom. I am also thankful for his generosity in going out of his way to ensure the fundamentals of English were understood by the class.

Ms Guerrera, for the endless supply of notes, and her calm manner certainly keeping the class composed before exams. I am grateful for her detailed feedback on practice responses and drilling into our heads the importance of understanding the syllabus as well as what the markers are demanding.

Mr Steinman, for giving 50 question holiday packets to nervous Year 7 students, despite at the time seeming over the top, was one of the main reasons the maths department achieved miraculous results in the HSC. I am grateful for his constant positive energy in lessons, making maths enjoyable.

Mr Wall, for giving the class the belief we can compete with other schools, through intense determination for everyone to understand foundational topics, as well as explaining the more advanced topics clearly. He was an instrumental aspect of the notably high achieving maths results.

Mr Yue, for his extensive knowledge of the subject I began to enjoy and its application to the real world. He always encouraged our class to read widely and engage in conversation over topics we were learning, which was pivotal in my success in economics.

Mr Quilty, for being a walking textbook on any business related question possible and offering his practical examples to enhance our understanding of more advanced business models. His experience in the subject was fundamental in the array of consistent results.

Ms Janes, on ensuring we remained calm during this horrendous year, always being organised and on top of all the events. She was truly an exemplar role model. Our cohort is also eternally grateful for her expertise in career guidance.

And of course my parents, for keeping me confident and maintaining a belief that I can achieve anything. You both ensured I remained driven, encouraging me to persevere through hardship, and made sure home was a peaceful study area. I am forever in your debt, and your high expectations despite daunting, allowed me to realise my potential.

Again, congratulations to all the High Achievers, and award recipients, I hope you got something valuable from my words today, all the best for this challenging year. Thank you.