Dear Class of 2021

Four years ago, many of you entered here nervously, yet hungry for this new beginning. In but a few days, we will gather together to celebrate your academic achievements and so much more.

I would like you to reflect on everything you have become—even beyond your books and your grades. Consider the changes you have made in your interactions, your understandings and your dreams. I am confident, if you are honest with yourself, that during these past four years you have matured, you have become more patient and empathetic, and you have prepared yourself for your future.

I encourage you to never lose sight of your experiences here. I hope we have taught you that your life is not static but is an ongoing journey. Travel it wisely and fully. Discover. Explore. Engage. Continue to be curious. Let your journey be filled with opportunities to reflect on the wonders God has placed before you.

Fellow Pioneers, be bold and always know this is your home away from home. Enjoy your life’s travels, but come back often.

John J. Petillo, Ph.D.

“Fellow Pioneers, be bold and always know this is your home away from home.” - Dr. P

One Journey Ends, Another Begins

DAN GARDELLA
Editor in Chief

For someone who is rarely speechless, I have been at a loss of words over the past month or so. It’s been more about taking in the moments, checking off the list of “lasts” as my college career comes to a close.

Walking around campus, covering Sacred Heart sports for the final times, and so many little moments have had me taking some extra time to think just how far I came in just four short years.

Arriving on campus back in August of 2017, I was wide-eyed and ready to start chasing my dream of having a career in sports media. I knew what I wanted to do and how to get there. All that separated me from that was time. Now, I would do so much to get just a few extra moments to look around and spend time with the people who have gone through this ride with me.

I would be remiss not to include the elephant in the room (or world!) and say I accomplished many things while being trapped inside my off-campus house due to a pandemic. But it doesn’t matter how it was done, or the toll it took, I did it.

“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”
—John Wooden

This school has done so much for me personally, professionally and spiritually. I owe this school so damn much for the person Sacred Heart has molded me into.

There are too many people to thank that I could not fit them all in here, but here are a few:

Thank you to my mom and dad along with my two sisters for the constant love, support, and occasional joking route to keep me humble. My success is every bit yours as well.

Thank you to my mom and dad along with my two sisters for the constant love, support, and occasional joking route to keep me humble. My success is every bit yours as well.

Thank you to my mom and dad along with my two sisters for the constant love, support, and occasional joking route to keep me humble. My success is every bit yours as well.

Thank you to the coaches and players who I have had the privilege of meeting and building relationships with over the years at Sacred Heart. From Anthony Latina and Jess Mannetti giving me their time on and off the court, to Mark Nofri following an NEC title. Treating me like the professional I wanted to be means more than words can describe.

Thank you to the various members of athletic communications who have led us through the countless interviews, Zoom meetings, and everything in between to help me grow as a reporter.

Thank you to Professor Kabak, who challenged me to grow from just a sports reporter my sophomore and junior years to leading the campus newspaper in my senior year. Your trust in me to challenge myself has made me more than ready to tackle what lies ahead in my journalism career.

Thank you to the plethora of people who I have had the privilege of working with at the newspaper over my three years. Each of you holds a special place in my heart, and I will never forget any of you.

Lastly, thank you to the people who have read, watched, or listened to my work over the past four years. I hope I made what I did worth noticing, and I hope I left my mark on how sports reporting is done at Sacred Heart for years to come.

In the song “Stole The Show” by Parron James, he sings, “Wave out to the crowd, and take our final bow. It’s our time to go, but at least we stole the show.” This is my final bow with the Spectrum newspaper, and with Sacred Heart. But if I have anything to say about it, this is only the beginning of what have been the greatest years of my life.

“Thank you Professor Kabak, who challenged me to grow from just a sports reporter my sophomore and junior years to leading the campus newspaper in my senior year.”

Dan Gardella ’21
SHANNON SZEFINSKI
Managing Editor for Editorial

"This is the hardest thing you will ever do."

This sentence, these nine words have stuck with me throughout the past four years. I remember it like it was yesterday: moving into Roncalli Hall on a hot August day. I was sobbing in my mom's arms, not wanting her and my dad to leave me in this strange and unfamiliar place.

"This is the hardest thing you will ever do."

Now this may or may not be true, only time will tell, but it's exactly what I needed to hear in that moment, and I don't think my mom realizes how much of an impact those nine words had on me that day.

College was a time of growth and experimenting and finding my path. Somewhere deep inside, that sobbing freshman girl knew that these would be the greatest four years of her life, but she just needed to get through the next four minutes of saying goodbye.

And she did.

Four years later, that sobbing freshman girl is now a sobbing senior girl who's once again not ready to say her goodbyes, but this time there is one major difference. As a freshman I wasn't ready to say goodbye to my parents, my brother, my friends, my high school, my hometown. I wasn't ready for the next step in life, I was scared of the unknown.

That has all changed after my four years at Sacred Heart.

As a senior, yes, I'm still crying, but I'm ready for the next step. The unknown doesn't scare me anymore but thrills me and excites me. I get antsy just thinking about my career and the life I'm about to live.

But I didn't become this person who's ready to take on the world by chance. It's because that sobbing freshman girl eventually wiped away the tears and decided not to be scared anymore.

Easier said than done, I know.

"Your comfort zone will kill you."

Is it dramatic? Maybe, but that's what I live by. There's no way you're going to grow if you always play it safe and never take a chance. Sure, it could be a major bust, but there's also a chance it won't be.

Example: Me joining Art Club as a freshman. Bust. Major Bust.

But did I make some art and make some friends? Of course I did. I also learned that I'm not the next Pablo Picasso. And that's okay!

Example: Me working Yale football broadcasts with people I barely know.

Success!

If it wasn't for that or for the countless times I threw myself into a scary and unknown situation, I certainly wouldn't be the person I am today.

"Try me, I know how clingy that sounds, but it's so incredibly true."

In those moments where it got scary and I thought that it would be easier to crawl back into my shell, I just thought of those nine words.

"This is the hardest thing you will ever do."

The hard part was over; it was getting here. Now it was time to flourish and enjoy the journey, make some memories and bring it full circle by crying every day leading up to graduation just like I did four years ago.

The past four years here were years that I never took for granted and I cherished every moment of. But recently I've taken the time to think about that sobbing freshman girl in her mom's arms, and if it wasn't for that girl and those nine words, I would not be crossing that stage in seven days as the person that I am.

As we now know, I'm not good at saying goodbye, so I'll leave it like this.

Thank you Mom for saying nine words that changed my whole perspective that brought me to this moment.

CITALLI GODINEZ
News Editor

The Beginning to an End

It is inevitable to believe that just because we are college seniors, our journey as students ends. In reality, we will always be students. We will always have something else to learn. We will always be taught something new.

As graduation is near, each student will take their own path. Despite the path, one must wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to fulfilling their life-long dream. While working toward the goal, it is okay to take a break. It is okay to stop and breathe. That's what my professors at Sacred Heart taught me.

Prof. Joseph Alicastro taught me that you will not stay where you started. In other words, as individuals, we grow and try new things that allow us to branch out of our comfort zone. For example, as a freshman advisee, I remember walking into his office and making it known that I wanted to be a news anchor, no matter what. He helped me work toward that goal, and luckily, I was granted the opportunity of anchoring "The Pulse."

It was at this moment that I realized that that wasn't what I wanted to do for my whole life. I appreciate Prof. Alicastro for allowing me to get out of my comfort zone during a time of desperation and for helping me welcome a new passion—writing and editing.

I always knew that writing was my escape zone and I wanted to use it as a form to speak to others. I spoke my passion to Prof. James Cantonguy, who instilled in me the importance of quality over quantity.

It is not about how many blog posts or how many articles one writes, it's about the quality of each.

Although it was hard for me to wrap my head around that ideology, I began to realize that in the job market, a potential employer will commend quality. Therefore, what's the point of having endless articles written in poor quality? I thank Prof. Cantonguy, as he pushed me to create well-thought-out pieces of work that speak and stand out to others.

During publishing written work, edits are critical. Prof. Joanne Kabak, during News Writing and Reporting, instilled in me the importance of re-reading and making essential edits. Prof. Kabak opened the doors for me to first become a writer for the Spectrum and then later become the news editor. Throughout my journey in the Spectrum, not only did I grow in my writing, but I allowed myself to fulfill my passion of both writing and editing. Most importantly, I was able to guide and mentor writers within my section. I thank Prof. Kabak for taking the time to edit my works and allowing that to be a learning process that I'll cherish throughout my journalism career.

There are various organizations at this university that I'll hold close to my heart. The Pulse and the Spectrum made my years at SHU memorable and allowed me to gain experience I would not have gained elsewhere.

The mentioned professors taught me an immense amount about the journalism industry, but as I step into the real world, I will be confronted with colleagues and bosses who will teach me even more than I already have been taught, and that's when I'll realize I will be a student my whole life. I immensely thank my professors for what they have taught and instilled in me.

The Pulse has given me so much. It brings you the latest campus news, events, and everything that affects us. I hope you continue to support us; thank you for the memories, the laughs, and the hard times. From now on, I'm going to make sure to remember all the good times.
MACKENZIE MAHER
Perspectives Editor

As my last few weeks of being a college student come to an end, I cannot help but reminisce on all the memories I have made over my past four years here at SHU. When I think back on all of the significant moments I have had here, there are so many people, organizations and aspects of this university that are responsible for making my four years of college the best they could have possibly been. So here is to many thank you's that are the reason for making my college experience the greatest.

Mom and Dad. This one goes without needing to be said. I would literally not be here if it was not for your two. Everything I have and get to do is because of you both. If it was not for your constant motivation and support, I would never have been able to make it past the first week of freshman year, let alone graduating. From listening to me cry freshman year with the tough adjustment of moving away from home to cheering me on with every accomplishment I made, you were there for me every step of the way. Thank you so much for everything you are always doing for me.

My sister, Megan. I’ve always looked up to you because of the amazing things you are always accomplishing. Many of my college achievements are credited to you always having confidence in me. You paved the way for doing so many great things and by doing everything you did, I always looked up to you and wanted to do some of the things you did, like join a sorority and be as successful as you are. Thank you for always pushing me to be my best self.

My housemates and the friends I’ve made along the way. There’s no way I would have been able to make it through four years without all of you by my side. You quickly turned into family, and I will miss you all so much. From movie nights to going out and staying up all night chatting about life, it hurts me to think that we will not share these moments anymore. Always having the luxury of walking into each other’s rooms, or going on late night ice cream runs in the middle of the week.

ELIZABETH KALFAYAN
Features Editor

In just one week, graduation day will be here, and the senior class will have to say goodbye to the place we’ve created our own little home at for the past four years. Four years ago, I was moving in early to Roncalli to start freshman year band camp. I was scared and excited about everything, as most freshmen are. I was scared to have to move in an entire week early because that meant a week alone in my room, my floor, and sometimes I felt like the whole building. I was scared because I didn’t know what to expect. Now, four years later, I am having those similar scared and excited feelings, except this time they’re at the thought of graduating and not being completely sure what to do after graduation day is over.

First, let’s say thank you to the band program for giving me my biggest and sometimes most stressful time commitment. There were times when I wanted to quit and never come back, but I decided I liked being in a band and making music with other people too much to do that. While it was stressful at times, I do want to say thank you to the band for giving me some of my closest friends and best memories I wouldn’t have been able to get if I was not participating in the band. Being able to go and perform in Disney and Ireland are top on the list of memorable moments the band program has helped provide me. The people in the band helped me feel confident enough in myself to switch from the instrument I had been playing for 11 years to something completely different. I went from playing the basic clarinet all the time to playing in the front ensemble for marching band. I couldn’t have done it without the help of some of the people in the band program who pushed and challenged me to do something different.

I was able to learn how to step out of my comfort zone and do things I never thought I would have done before. The program has helped me to gain different kinds of leadership abilities, while finding a sense of community. I am grateful for the band program, no matter how many stressful and irritating moments came with it, and I don’t regret joining at all. I have been making music and playing in a band for 13 years now, and I would have regretted not continuing throughout my college education.

Four years of school, band and so many other extracurricular activities, just in college alone, and it’s all coming to an end. I am excited because graduation day is supposed to be fun and exciting, but also nervous because all of a sudden, I am done. Going to school and getting an education consistently every year since I entered kindergarten when I was four, and now it’s over. Each educational stage has come with its own new experiences, so this new post-education experience will be something I have never done before, and I will tackle it when it comes.

So thank you to the Sacred Heart Band Program, Campus Ministry, the English and Catholic Studies Departments and the Spectrum, for giving me the courage to step outside of my comfort zone and find my voice.

“Throughout my journey in the Spectrum, not only did I grow in my writing, but I allowed myself to fulfill my passion of both writing and editing.”

Citali Godinez ’21

“Thank you Spectrum for allowing me to grow as a writer, editor, team member and leader simultaneously.”

Mackenzie Maher ’21
Editorials

Sacred Heart: Where I Found Myself

JACKIE O’ROURKE
A&E Editor

Five years ago, Sacred Heart University was a school I had never heard of that my high school guidance counselor put on my list to check out. That April, my parents and I began my college tour experience and drove to Connecticut to tour it.

Sacred Heart was the first tour I did. I think I might have known that day in April 2016 I just got an initial feeling that I was home and that I belonged here. Every tour after that, I would say, “Well, it’s not Sacred Heart!” and compare every other college tour I went on to Sacred Heart. No other school compared.

Needless to say, a year later in April 2017, I officially committed and my parents put a deposit down at Sacred Heart University.

In August 2017, I moved into Thomas Morton Hall with a lot of ambition and a horrible haircut.

At one point during move in day, my parents and I heard, “PAUL? CINDY?” and it was a childhood friend of mine I have known since I was four who moved away in fifth grade. Turns out, she ended up living three doors down from me in Merton. We have rebuilt our childhood friendship, and she has remained one of my closest friends throughout college. Even in college, the world is so small.

The first semester of freshman year was so pure. I was so excited to be where I was and making new friends. I remember my first fraternity meal. I remember my first meal at Linda’s. I remember my first President’s Gala.

Second semester of freshman year was great. I had an established friend group. I knew my way around more. I was in a few clubs. Toward the end of the semester, one of my new guy friends and I admitted our feelings for each other. Fast forward to two weeks ago, we just celebrated our third anniversary together. From playing “Quirkpals” every night in my friend’s room to all the late night JP’s runs to Zombie class at the Pitt, the spring semester of freshman year was where I began to make my mark.

Then, things took a turn. The fall semester of sophomore year was the worst. My established friend group all transferred. I lived in beautiful Berg but with a random roommate I was the polar opposite of. I tried sorority recruitment and left on the last day because it was not for me. I love my alone time, but during those four months, I had too much of it. I spent a lot of time in my room and ate most meals alone.

Possibly one of the only good things to come out of that semester was that I was enrolled in CM 211 with Professor Kabak. The first day of class, I found out I would be writing for the school newspaper. At the time, I had just decided I wanted to pursue something in the School of Communications and Media Arts but still, wasn’t sure what area. This class gave me my spark.

Here I am two and a half years later, a journalism major writing my piece for the senior issue, having served as an editor for two years.

Sophomore year spring semester was a complete 360. I studied abroad in Dingle, Ireland. It is easily the best decision I have ever made in my life. I have written an editorial that took up an entire page of The Spectrum about this experience before, so I won’t do that again, but it was just the best. I can’t say enough of how much I love SHU in Dingle.

Fall of my junior year was great. I lived in the gritty Ridge townhouses with seven other girls, some of whom have become my college sisters. Being an upperclassman was so thrilling! I had a lot of friends, I was taking more major classes related to what I wanted to do, I traded the Dingle pubs for frat basements in Bridgeport. I was happy and felt like I had made my mark.

The only complaint I had were the shuttles from campus to The Ridge. What we had of spring 2020 was cool. I luckily turned 21 that February (although, the only time a professor has made me cry was CM 212, Wexler may not be so lucky) and got to experience Red’s a handful of times. Doing the rest of school from home was challenging. My parents and I designated our ecellar as my classroom. I found it hard to focus and be motivated.

Senior year, I moved into a house in Bridgeport with the girls I lived with in The Ridge. It is such an upgrade and truly the first time I have felt like an adult. I was introduced to Trader Joe’s. Even though we didn’t get to spend the senior year we deserve and have been waiting for, we have made the most of it. From our own President Gala, Friendsgiving, going to T.H.C. and Flipside, and all the chill nights in between, we’ve done it all. For that, I am grateful.

I have kept busy during my pandemic senior year. Besides being A&E Editor at The Spectrum, I am president of SHU’s chapter of Her Campus, the Social Media Manager for Sacred Heart’s TV News Program, “The Pulse,” and the editor for Interviews and Internet Culture at Mud Magazine.

This all can be a lot of times, but I am so passionate about it all that I make it work. In a time of such uncertainty, I personally have felt so much purpose.

All of these experiences prove that Sacred Heart was where I found myself. Although I am dreading leaving, I know that SHU has set me up for success. I can’t thank Sacred Heart and every person and experience I have encountered enough.

I also can’t thank my parents enough for providing me this wonderful education and the experiences that have come with it. I would not be the woman I am today without any of it.

MIKZENIE CARBONE
Sports Editor

Spectrum is more than words on a newspaper. Spectrum is filled with a board of members who work hard on a weekly basis to provide a professional piece of work. As a member of this board for two years, I can say we are very proud of what we produce on a weekly basis.

However, Spectrum is much more than a newspaper. At first, it was learning to love journalism and seeing our work out there in the world for people to read. I knew I loved to cover sports, and Spectrum had an opportunity to strengthen my writing and leadership skills.

Two years later, I have made countless friends and have also had the benefit to work with and help others grow. I have helped others learn to love the value of journalism and that it is more than words on a piece of paper. I have enjoyed watching writers blossom and understand the language of sports in journalism.

I started out with Spectrum as a staff writer, and I will be leaving as sports editor. My goal entering Spectrum was to write about sports. I will be leaving with journalistic skills, a handful of friends, and a lot of appreciation for the experience I gained.

MIKZENIE CARBONE
Editor

The confidence I have gained in the last two years is incredible. I finally feel confident in my own skin, and Spectrum was one of those reasons. Spectrum taught me to believe in myself and to help others gain that confidence.

To Dan Gardella, the Spectrum’s Editor-in-Chief, thank you for getting me hooked on covering Sacred Heart sports when I was one of your writers. To Shannon Szefinski, the Spectrum’s Managing Editor, thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and an enjoyable work environment.

To Professor Kabak, who is the advisor of Spectrum, thank you for working with us weekly and encouraging us to be better than the last issue we produced. You have taught someone like myself to continue to work hard and be better than the week before.

If you’re reading this and questioning whether you should join Spectrum or that club at your university, don’t question, just join! I encourage you not to hesitate and to step out of your comfort zone. You will meet amazing people, add experience to your resume, and gain confidence for the future.

To the individuals who join the board down the road, thank you for continuing the work that so many people have contributed to. I hope you soak up every moment you have with it because after you know it, you will be graduating and handing off the work to the next board.

Spectrum, I will not miss the stress at times, but I will miss everyone and everything that you have brought me. Without stress, there is no reward. This is a worthwhile reward, and I will miss every moment of it.

MIKZENIE CARBONE
‘21

My Journey to Journalism

“I finally feel confident in my own skin, and Spectrum was one of those reasons.”

Mikzenie Carbone

SHANNON SZEFINSKI,
Spectrum’s Managing Editor,

The confidence I have gained in the last two years is incredible. I finally feel confident in my own skin, and Spectrum was one of those reasons. Spectrum taught me to believe in myself and to help others gain that confidence.

To Dan Gardella, the Spectrum’s Editor-in-Chief, thank you for getting me hooked on covering Sacred Heart sports when I was one of your writers. To Shannon Szefinski, the Spectrum’s Managing Editor, thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and an enjoyable work environment.

To Professor Kabak, who is the advisor of Spectrum, thank you for working with us weekly and encouraging us to be better than the last issue we produced. You have taught someone like myself to continue to work hard and be better than the week before.

If you’re reading this and questioning whether you should join Spectrum or that club at your university, don’t question, just join! I encourage you not to hesitate and to step out of your comfort zone. You will meet amazing people, add experience to your resume, and gain confidence for the future.

To the individuals who join the board down the road, thank you for continuing the work that so many people have contributed to. I hope you soak up every moment you have with it because after you know it, you will be graduating and handing off the work to the next board.

Spectrum, I will not miss the stress at times, but I will miss everyone and everything that you have brought me. Without stress, there is no reward. This is a worthwhile reward, and I will miss every moment of it.
the best possible version of myself. My time here at SHU has shown me that I might take longer than you think to find what you want to do with your life after graduation. I walked into college as an exercise science major wanting to get into the physical therapy program. Now, I enjoy journalism and want to get into the media production industry.

That is one of the most important things I learned from SHU: learning what my true passion was. Sports has always been my passion, as I've played and watched sports almost religiously since I was three. My parents always tell people how much I get back from school. I grab some food and turn on ESPN and sit there for hours watching. I was always interested in a career in sports, but I was always nervous being on camera and I thought that was the only way to get into the sports media industry.

But as soon as I picked up a camera, edited my video, created the front page, I realized that doing everything behind the camera was what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life.

I also learned how important work ethic is in college, and I learned it the hard way. Freshman year was such a struggle academically because I thought it was going to be as easy as high school. Turned out that it was not, and I cannot believe that I was capable of putting in this amount of work to earn this degree. The sleepless nights, the group study sessions, the office hours, I am so happy that I was able to kick myself in the butt and change the way I worked.

Beyond academics, college can also teach you emotionally. I came into college as a shy, hot-headed, introverted child. I am now walking out as a very social, level-headed adult, and that is something I thought I would never be able to become.

College taught me that I do not need to get mad at everything that does not go my way, because sometimes it might be for the better. There were a lot of situations where my emotions were running high, and I was able to calm myself down to get through almost every situation. In an earlier life however, I would react to those same situations so that I would not have the friends, opportunities, and memories that I have now.

I also learned that I am not alone, and I do not have to go through tough situations on my own. I realized that I could ask for help and also found people that have experienced what I have been through. I am so thankful for the people that I have met over these last four years. Even though I will be at SHU for one year of graduate school, getting my undergraduate degree will end a chapter of my life I will never forget.

Becoming Me

ALSO MCCRAY

Senior Sports Writer

If the younger version of me could see myself right now, she would be so proud. I have blossomed into a version of myself that I never saw coming.

When I first got to campus, I had no idea what to expect because who does? I was just excited to take college life by storm and to finally feel what it was like to be on my own. I didn’t have a plan, but I just knew I would get it done while enjoying myself at the same time.

I knew that playing basketball would take up the majority of my time because that was already predetermined for me. I was here at Sacred Heart on a basketball scholarship, but I was in search of what else was next for me. I knew there was more to me than just playing sports.

Although I enjoyed my high school years playing basketball, living without any real responsibility, hanging out with friends, and pretty much just cruising through school, I wanted to take on more challenges and responsibilities once I got to college. Although college basketball comes with its own challenges, I just wanted more. Now that I am at the finishing line of my collegiate career, I can say that I did just what I hoped for.

Growing up, my favorite subject was math, but once I got to high school, it changed to English (when I had to learn algebra, math pretty much became a frenemy). I’ve always enjoyed writing papers more than taking tests and solving problems. I decided to study communications and focus on sports media because although I knew the ball would stop bouncing at some point, I still wanted to be involved in the world of sports in a way that I would enjoy.

I honestly didn’t know how I would get it done, but I knew I had come to the right school to figure it out. Plus, I felt like my social skills and love for sports would give me a little bit of a boost while trying to make my way into the industry.

Coming to Sacred Heart opened many doors for me and motivated me to go after every opportunity. When I was a freshman, one of my teammates, who was a senior at the time, was studying the same major that I had an interest in. She told me a little bit about the program and about how much she enjoyed learning in the school of communications, so from there on out I was convinced.

My sophomore year, I took a multimedia production course and news writing course that opened my eyes to the broad world of communications. That year, I knew that I wanted to explore every opportunity that the school had to offer and not just sports broadcasting.

Professors were great. They all went out of their way to help you know more than to be told to one area of the industry, so I made sure to soak up everything within my four years. I worked with production, journalism, digital editing, podcast, photography, and much more.

My love for studying communications here at SHU was one of the best things I could have ever done. I did way more than I had set out to do. I became a staff writer for our school’s news desk, then I joined the board as an editor; I shadowed the live production team during games when I was free to learn more about what goes into a live sports game; I anchored a few news segments; I learned how to work a camera and tell a story; I became a senior producer for our student-run news show on campus; and I joined a few clubs outside of the program.

My time here at Sacred Heart has been nothing less than incredible, and as my senior year comes to an end, I can honestly say that the biggest joy I gained from being in college was growth. I took risks, put myself out there, accepted challenges, worked my hardest to reach my goals, and never gave up because I knew I would be worth it in the end.

Now, with this one year of this school and the program is was in, I can say that although the real world can be scary, I am prepared to take on that challenge. My family, friends, classmates, professors, and team have supported me along the way and will forever be a part of who I am today.

"Deciding to study communications here at SHU was one of the best things I could have ever done."

Asla McCray '21
The Sacred Heart Spectrum

Moving My Tassel to the Right

REIANNA FLORES
Photography Editor

I'm not sure how I made it to senior year, but I know I'm still here 1,063 days later writing my last ever article for the Spectrum. I remember the age when I first got a journal. I was about five years old, writing silly stories, song lyrics that expressed my emotions, or about how the flowers poked through the fences on a summer day in my backyard. I used to doodle in there all the time.

However, I never really discovered my passion until I was nearing high school. I had read almost all of the "Diary Of a Wimpy Kid" books and felt inspired to keep a diary, or journal of my own. I started journaling more around age 12 and continued even more throughout high school. I became so excited to write, I joined a creative writing class in high school and read my poetry aloud at mini talent shows. In addition to finding a passion for writing, I also found a passion for photography around that same time period. Honestly, when I first had downloaded Instagram, that's when I started to appreciate photography more. There were so many different artists that expressed themselves on there at the time. One user that I always looked up to on Instagram was "Clark Little." He would take macro shots of the beautiful clear waves in Hawaii; it was unlike anything I had ever seen. I instantly fell in love with the creativity behind photography.

I found it amazing how you could make anything appear more interesting just by the angle and lighting used with a camera. I got my first camera at age 13. I would take it everywhere with me and I used to give myself assignments to train myself. I also would beg anyone to drive me to a new park location just to explore more of what I could do on my camera and see what I could make look more beautiful than it already was. I took a film class in high school and used a film camera as well. That was when I learned how to develop film. I fell in love with everything about photography instantly as I learned more.

Fast forward to 2017, when I first came to Sacred Heart University, I was unsure of what my major should be. I knew I wanted to do photography, but I also loved writing. I didn't know what to choose.

It wasn’t until sophomore year when I officially decided my major would be media arts with a concentration in journalism. As soon as I had a title to who I knew I was going to be, I felt a huge weight lifted off myself. I felt established and confident; it only made me work harder to get to where I am.

It is now 2021, and I have accomplished so much so far. I have taken numerous courses that have tested both my photography and journalism skills. Along the way, I have become well rounded in other areas. I wrote for Spectrum, and I am currently the photo editor for Spectrum. I volunteered at a blog writing internship over the summer of 2020. I started a clothing line called "Riptide Junkies" with my featured photography/designs on each t-shirt (the Instagram for it is (rip tide junkies)).

There is much more I plan to do. I hope I can further my writing and photography skills much more and I am excited to collaborate with other artists I come across throughout my life. However, I couldn’t be more grateful for what Sacred Heart University has taught me within my major and while being here in general. I can’t wait until day 1,076 when I move my tassel to the right and take that step into the next big phase of my life.

Once a Pioneer, Always a Pioneer

DANIELLE DAVANZO
Public Relations Manager

Class of 2021... definitely an interesting time to be a senior, to say the least. With graduation being around the corner, it is insane to think about how fast the last four years have gone by. Graduating high school four years ago, I had no idea what Sacred Heart University would bring me. However, a huge moment that I would say was starting my new chapter opening, and that is exactly what it has been. I have grown so much as an individual and I never even saw it coming. All I know is that I was nervous because I did not know what to come. Now, it has been four years and I am feeling that same feeling all over again. Another chapter is closing, while another is opening in this book called Danielle Davanzo’s life. As it is very bitter-sweet to end this chapter of my life, I just want to give one piece of advice to all of my fellow Pioneers. Enjoy every moment and do not take it for granted. Yes, even the stress of finals week, the long lines at Linda’s, and the hunger games we call registration. Take in every little moment, the good, the bad, the happy, the sad, the fun, the bad memories, the good memories. Eventually, the good memories will outweigh the bad memories. And in the end, you are going to want to hit the rewind button and live it all over again.

At least that is the button I want to click right now. The one thing that reassures me as this chapter closes is that great things lie ahead. Sacred Heart has always reassured us that we are destined for greatness. Opportunities and experiences are out there waiting for us, and we will accomplish all we set our minds and hearts to.

I am glad to have chosen the perfect school for me when I was 17 because I could have never imagined the last four years anywhere else. I mean, what’s better than being a Pioneer, right? I am thankful for all of the ups and the downs over the last four years that have brought me to this point in my life. They say everything happens for a reason, so even if you are being pushed and pulled along the way, I guess it is meant to be.

Finally, I just want to say thank you to my family, friends, professors, and organizations I have been a part of. Without all of the people who have impacted my life here, it would not have been the same and I would not be the same.

Thank you, Sacred Heart, for opportunities that have changed my life, lifelong friends, and memories that will last me a lifetime. Once a Pioneer, always a Pioneer, Roll Pios.
On This Day We Become Legendary

JONATHAN SORIANO
Sales Manager

When it’s mentioned, graduation is often thought about as an ending. A curtain call to all the chaotic and unforgettable moments that happened up until its mention. Sitting in the shoes of a student that is now weeks away from crossing that stage, I can assure you that it is anything but. Graduation is a start to a new beginning. That is what Sacred Heart presented to all of us.

Whether it was a chance to explore something you never had before, meet people who suddenly turned from freshman orientation roommates to lifelong friends, or simply just to go somewhere new — it was a blank canvas we have all gotten to paint on. Graduation is just the next canvas to bring to life as our watercolors dry on the masterpiece known as our Sacred Heart experience.

Being a Pioneer has been an experience unlike anything I could have imagined — especially given the un heralded last three semesters or so we have had to endure. At that same time, it has been so enriching from every single aspect. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we learned just as much outside of these classrooms as we did when we were sweating over the grades and finals within them. Looking back on all our growth, it is substantial. Now preparing to embark on our new journeys as alumni, we can thank all the relationships that helped mold us into who we are today and the lessons we will carry beyond.

That is what has made my Sacred Heart story so special. I can honestly sit here and say the connections, relationships, and memories given to me in my time here are truly priceless. Words do not do it justice. If you were a friend past or present — I thank you, for it’s people like you who make the college experience so unforgettable! When I gave tours as an ambassador for SHU, they would always say how we are a “door-holding” kind of a school, and thinking back on my times with classmates, teammates, and all those in between, I am happy to say that is true.

To my fellow Spectrum board members, I thank you as well, because without you all, none of this would have been possible. Spectrum has given me a place to be myself, a place to collaborate, a place to create and discover. It is thanks to all your hard work that I was able to have these opportunities and look forward to the clock striking noon every Wednesday for the new issues to hit the racks. Thinking back to my freshman year self, I could not have imagined myself being one to write in the senior edition of the university newspaper, but three years later, I am glad to say I did!

Now is not the time to look back on the times we had or the times we may have missed due to this COVID-era senior year being one like no other. Like I said in my first editorial, home is something that does not have a manual to it — it is just something you make your own wherever you go. That is what I believe we should carry forward from this point on — knowing that no matter where we go on the paths that follow us after graduation, we will always have a home here together as Pioneers.

Thank you 2020 2021
Spectrum Seniors!
As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

The Senior Spectrum Editors

As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

The Senior Spectrum Editors

As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

The Senior Spectrum Editors

As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

The Senior Spectrum Editors

As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

The Senior Spectrum Editors

As much work as the writing section editors contribute to the publication, Spectrum could not run as successfully without its dedicated support team of editors and managers.

Have you ever noticed how important photographs are to the coverage of each of the topics you are reading? You can thank Kieanna Flores, photo editor, for managing a large staff of photographers, assigning them, training them, and using every skill to ensure that if even you were remote this year, you still provided photos that made each story come alive visually.

Publishing a paper costs money, and Spectrum looks to advertising to bolster its budget. Not an easy task in any year, but especially when many businesses in the area are completely shut down and many restaurants that students love have

Thank you Professor Kabak for all that you put into this paper. No senior on this board is the same person, writer, or editor they were from the day they started with the Spectrum and that has
doing everything to do with the kind of person, advisor and professor that you are. We truly cannot thank you enough for pushing us to be our best and challenging us all while being our biggest supporter. We will take this lessons with us for the rest of our lives.

- 2021 Spectrum Seniors