

Allison Schofield - Student Coordinator

Good afternoon Class of 2014 and Welcome to Gettysburg! My name is Allison Schofield, I'm senior Management major and Art History minor from Greenwich, Connecticut. I am also this year's Orientation Coordinator. I have spent the summer in Gettysburg anxiously awaiting your arrival and working with administrators and other students to plan the next five days you will spend here. In addition to working with Orientation, I am also a co-chair of the Senior Class Gift Campaign this year as well as member of the Campus Activities Board.

When I thought about what I wanted to say to you all today, there were many things I could focus on. I wanted to find a way to say something that would be meaningful and easily relatable to all of you. While I was thinking about this speech I remembered a quote that I found while doing some work with Annual Giving. The quote from, Ralph Mahaffie, an alumnus of Gettysburg College from the class of 1922 read, "Whatever I am, I owe to Gettysburg." I realize that since the majority of you have been here for less than 24 hours this quote might seem ridiculous or unrealistic but I can honestly say that for me and my Gettysburg experience, it is true.

When I first arrived here on my Opening Day, Wednesday, August 28th 2007, I was unsure of what to expect. In high school, I had just gone through the motions and I assumed that Gettysburg would be the same. I did not doubt that I would have a great experience but I saw that experience has going to classes, making friends, and maybe trying to get an on-campus job. I vividly remember attending the Activities Fair on the Friday of the first week of classes. As most First-Years do, I signed up for many clubs but with no clear intentions of getting highly involved in any of them. The next week, a few of my friends on my hall asked if I would attend a Campus Activities Board meeting with them. Not in any position to turn down the opportunity to meet new people, I decided to go with them. It is because I went to that one meeting that I have made some of the best friends (students and administrators) and have had the opportunity to hold various leadership positions on campus. It is the reason that I have the honor of standing here and talking to you today. Between all the leadership positions and the friendships I have made, I have learned so much about myself and have grown as a person. I owe all of that to this institution, the people that work here and the students that go here. I know that I still have room to grow but I can honestly say that this institution has transformed me into the best possible version of myself. I am confident, that if you give it the opportunity, this institution can do the same for all of you.

I'm not saying that everyone's experience has to be like mine, it shouldn't be! My advice to you today is to put yourself out there; join a club that you're interested in or start an intramural sports team. It might not seem like a big deal to put your name on a club's list or attend their meeting but you never know what other opportunities you'll get or what people you'll meet. Over the next four years of your Gettysburg Experience, you will meet some of your best friends and integral members of your support system. These friends and supporters will not only be your peers but also administrators, coaches or faculty members. Everyone standing here today and every member of the Gettysburg College community will support you, challenge you and assist you in achieving any goals you set for yourselves.

I do not just value this institution because of the various opportunities it has given me but also because of the ways that it has challenged me. If my advisors in various roles had just guided me through tasks and experiences, I would not value my experience nearly as much. It is because of the way that my advisors and faculty members have challenged me and encouraged me to challenge myself that I have grown so much over the past three years. I can assure you that if you put yourself out there, the administrators and faculty members will support and challenge you in similar ways.

So far, I've spoken a lot about how great Gettysburg College is, and, trust me, it is! However, the next four years, essentially what we like to call your Gettysburg Experience, is not just about what Gettysburg College can do for you and all the opportunities it can offer you. It is also about *your* initiative. No one here is going to force you to seize the opportunities that are offered to you. No one will personally take you to an intramural sports meeting or to a Campus Activities Board meeting. YOU have to take initiative and be in control of your Gettysburg Experience. This summer, I had the opportunity to attend a couple of the same send-offs that President Riggs attended. At one of the send-offs she told the members of the Class of 2014 that one of the most important things to bring to Gettysburg was their initiative. I can say that I whole-heartedly agree with this. There is nothing more important that you could bring with you today than your initiative. No one will hold your hand throughout this process. Part of what happens here is learning how to take charge of your own experience and molding it into *your perfect* Gettysburg Experience.

You might have an idea of what the next four years is going to look like for you. You might already know what you want to get involved in, what you want to major in, and what goals you want to accomplish. For those people, it's great that you have already thought about your Gettysburg Experience but it's also important to realize that everything will not go the way you are planning it now. For the people that don't know, don't be concerned you'll figure it out along the way. You are going to hit speed bumps and have to change your plans and discover deviations in your plan. However, it is in these deviations that you are able to go through the best learning experiences and grow as a result.

Now, you've heard a lot about my Gettysburg Experience and hopefully have started thinking about your own. My message to you all is pretty simple, put yourselves out there. Do something that you've never tried before or something that you know is going to challenge you. You never know where each opportunity and each person you meet on this campus is going to lead you. And, hopefully, by the end of your four years you'll be able to see all the ways in which you have grown into the best possible version of yourself.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce the President of Gettysburg College, Janet Morgan Riggs.

