

Nicholas Lee

SENIOR - 2nd Place

Alumni Senior Writing Contest - 2017

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Not everyone in the world is lucky enough to grasp the concept of what it means to be a Saintsman, to be a part of the brotherhood, to immerse oneself in "the Saints experience." That being said, the traditions that create the very foundation of the school can only be described and relatable to those who lived it. It is only now as a soon-to-be alumnus that I personally can speak to what it means to attend this institution. The invaluable experiences over the past four years have allowed me to truly grow and mature academically, spiritually, and socially. I grasp the genuine belief that my Saints experience will be the most life-altering years of my life. Therefore, I attest to the fact that the most important qualities that have been highlighted throughout my career were my passion for service, dedication to leadership, and love of all that Saints has to offer.

Coming from elementary school as a quiet teen who barely spoke a word, I feel confident saying that I blossomed into a capable young man ready to take my next strides at the collegiate level. I personally have discovered that Saints has unknowingly drawn out an altruistic nature from somewhere deep within me. From simple baked potato or burrito sales within the school, to weekend-long construction projects at Habitat for Humanity, I was given countless opportunities to learn that true service means transcending "going through the motion," rather, it involves putting your entire efforts into your actions. Honestly, I do admit that I am not a perfect student who was always like this. I was the stereotypically stubborn freshman who resented waking up early and attending a beach clean-up that counted for absolutely zero service hours. It took time for me to look up to the upperclassmen and see their ambient attitudes as they lugged boxes from trucks into warehouses, back and forth with smiles on their faces. I soon adopted their mentality and mimicked their smiles, making my work into a fun and positive experience.

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SR - 37 It was through service that I learned the meaning of "passion," and it was through Saints that I had these opportunities in the first place.

It brings a tear to my eye reflecting on the roller coaster of emotions which were drawn out of me by Saints. Most notably was my dedication to leadership, something of which this school had exponentially fostered from setting foot on campus. I can never forget the indifference I felt when winning a freshman class election on student government and later the anguish after losing the next two years. My losses could have been the barrier that restricted my involvement in Saints. But I found different avenues by reaching prominent positions Campus Ministry and a few clubs. Little did I know that I gained people skills and really enjoyed taking the initiative in projects dealing with the very same organizations I was involved with. So I returned and after using the skills I acquired from leadership roles elsewhere, I successfully won the election senior year. This past year I became involved in such a variety of activities that I always find something to do without looking very hard. To me, this is the beauty of Saints. It had a way of sculpting me into someone who is in awe at my level of involvement, and unbelievably grateful that my school has such a rich variety to choose from.

Yes, I referred to Saints as "my school." The final piece of the Saints experience is that love for the Alma Mater. College cannot provide the exact atmosphere and brotherhood which Saints has mastered over the years. Love for my school stems from the pride I feel when meeting someone outside of the classroom, competing with opponents when I step out on the volleyball court, interacting with alumni who marvel at my purple and gold Saints sweatshirt. Love for my school stems from the idea that we see faculty outside of the classroom and willingly engage them with casual conversation, comfortable that we can develop close relationships with our teachers as well. Love for my school stems from the great big hearts of

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SR - 37 the donors who helped fund the campaign to construct our new activity center. Most of all, love for my school comes every single time I raise my left arm and recite the glorious Alma Mater, surround by my brothers from Saints.

So in conclusion, what is the Saints experience? The Saints experience is the very foundation to which Saintsmen past and present are united by the very bonds of community, truth, and love, and the capacity to which she fosters to the growth of young men into compassionate young gentlemen who carry themselves with grace, integrity, and ability to make a difference in a changing world. But the Saints experience is even simpler than a bunch of pretty words. It is simply "home." It is a place where classmates can gather and reminisce about how our common high school has improved over the years, share fond memories and tears with our brothers, and cherish that we were a part of a long legacy of Saintsmen, all who took part in the glory of our high school days, all who took part in the Saints experience!