

“One Last Tour”

President Zaki, Members of the College, and Guests,

For the last three years, I’ve been lucky to have the most glamorous job on campus: Bowdoin Tour Guide. I mean, if walking backwards, dodging bikes, and answering questions about the meal plan isn’t glamorous, I don’t know what is! But seriously, I’ve enjoyed the job because it gave me the opportunity to share my love for Bowdoin with prospective students. In a way, this speech counts as my final Bowdoin tour, with you, Class of 2024, as tour guides figuratively walking backwards along with me.

In our first, nerve-wracking days of college, we had no friendly Bowdoin tour guide to welcome us, no upperclassmen to show us the way. As first years, we were the only students on campus, a first in Bowdoin history. Our “Offer of the College” wasn’t the eloquent language of William DeWitt Hyde, but an offer of unimaginable adventure and challenge. We had to make Bowdoin our own without knowing what Bowdoin “should” be. In true Class of 2024 spirit, we carved our own path. We embraced the difficulty of college during the pandemic, leaning on our new friends as we scattered across the world first year spring.

Campus was closed to tours then, but had I given one, it would have been short and almost entirely outside. I could have stopped at my brick, Hyde, pointed out Moulton, my assigned dining hall, and circled around the tent where we bundled up and ate outside, 6 feet apart, in the cold days of November. Our version of campus was small, but we made it friendly. We watched movies on the quad, chatted in the dining hall line, and mastered the Bowdoin Hello, even with no one to guide us.

Every year our Bowdoin experience was about adapting. We relearned how to navigate campus spaces with three times as many students. We ate our first meals in the light room and

learned how to live with roommates. As a newly hired tour guide, I led prospective families through the spaces I was just getting to know myself – Roux, Smith, and the upstairs of Moulton.

Thanks to our unique first year and the strong relationships developed then, our class cares deeply about one another. At Bowdoin Thanksgiving dinner, we saved seats for the friends we'd met in tents outside. We pushed the school to expand mental health resources and demanded representation for all identities on campus. And we laughed—in college house basements and stadiums that were full. Graduates, we conquered our sophomore and junior years with curiosity, hard work, and kindness.

Now, as seniors, we are the metaphorical tour guides for younger Bowdoin students. We model the strength of the Bowdoin community and the grit of a grade who never quit. And as I've gotten older, my tours are no longer about physical spaces on campus. They've become about you, the inspirational people that make Bowdoin special. I point out the tree where I run into fellow tour guides playing guitar on the quad. I talk about my friends who invited me to SASA's Diwali celebration. I share the success of the girls' basketball team, and how Bowdoin had the highest attendance at tournament games out of any D3 school. I mention supers with friends, plates piled high with mozzarella sticks. My tours are filled with your stories, our stories, the stories that make us the Class of 2024, the stories of resilient people who are equipped to change the world.

Graduates, there is no college tour equivalent for the coming stage of our lives. No picturesque pamphlet to read in the admissions office. No information session to adulthood. But I am confident we don't need another tour. We are strong, we have each other, and Bowdoin has gifted us the ability to be passionate, courageous leaders. We are the guides of the future, and let this next chapter be the just the beginning.