Priscilla Daboni, Class of 2018

A famous philosopher and composer once said, “…do you love me. I tell her only partly. I only love my bed and my momma, I’m sorry.” For many of us, however, “my bed” can be replaced by “the reg”. Unintentionally, we have given so much of ourselves in exchange for our success at this institution and leaving it may feel as if we are leaving behind a part of ourselves as well. That pang in your heart, the tears, they’re real.

But so are the sweet memories. Of feigning heart failure because your house was that close to winning scav. Of meeting someone that turned caterpillars to butterflies in your stomach. For some of us, we didn’t actually meet them but we posted about them on UChicago Crushes or even less boldly gawked over them in Harper Memorial Library or the Regenstein Library so that counts too… Of having an impromptu picnic in the quad with your friends because it’s a sunny 57 degrees in May and beggars cannot be choosers. It is critical to remember those memories too.

It’s easy to look back on your college experience and only take away the long hours in the reg, the tears you cried after your first organic chemistry exam or the pain you felt when all the chicken and waffles were gone at fourth meal. But it’s just as important to remember that what makes UChicago unique are the experiences, relationships and lessons that we’ve had and learned, those that cannot be replicated anywhere else. How will you use what you’ve learned, exclusively from this university, to change your world? UChicago has equipped us with knowledge, degrees, and skills that will help us be monetarily successful - but is success only limited to that? Getting a job at JP Morgan is an accomplishment - but why not add on successfully being able to maneuver difficult conversations with respect and regard? Getting into medical school is a feat - but so is using your privilege, in whatever form it manifests itself, to speak up for the voices that are silenced. One day some of you may get your articles published in the New York Times - but I hope that you will also be a force fighting for the equality of all gender identities, races, backgrounds, economic statuses and sexual orientations.

The world is so much bigger than the people and conversations that are within your comfort zone. And in a world, society, campus that is fixated on freedom of speech and expression, we have to ask ourselves, what are we saying and what are we doing with what we’ve learned? Knowledge is not intelligence and as our motto implies, you have to grow in knowledge but it takes an intelligent person to apply it to enrich life. Not only yours but the lives around you as well. You can quote philosophers like Rousseau, Marx and Fanon by heart but if you can’t use your heart in how you maneuver the world then your quotes and degrees and your credentials mean nothing.

Some may think they’ve lived an isolated life here. That everything they’ve become is solely by their own accord. But where would you be without that friend who would sit in the Regenstein Library with you, week after week, going over your coding? That professor who wrote you a bomb recommendation letter? The board members of various student organizations who took the time and energy to create events that were a source of stress-relief, happiness and good food? You can’t leave a school like this to go on and live a self-centered life forgetting that so much of who you are is because of others. I implore you to use and apply your knowledge aka be intelligent, which obviously, comes easy for all of us. So let me push you a bit further. Don’t just go out there. Look in here as well and find a way to change your world. Thank you.