



Hey Gus,

I know you're not used to being called that, but you'll become accustomed to it eventually. I'm writing to you at the age of 21, just a few steps away from graduating college.

First and foremost, I want to say this: Congratulations Gustavo. Be proud of yourself, it's not every day you get to say you're graduating college.

Where would 18-year-old me want to start? Well, I want to tell you that you have learned to trust yourself and have established a sense of self-confidence in not only what you do, but who you are.

Would you believe me if I told you would eventually become the president of two student organizations? Would you believe me if I told you that you would mentor an incoming group of Thompson Learning Community scholars during their first year of college, and then you'd return to do the same for second-year students? Would you believe me if I told you that you would have the self-confidence to speak in front of hundreds of students during a dinner? Would you believe me if I told you that you would find a group of friends that you would travel, explore, and experience hilarious moments with? Would you believe me if I told you that you would be chosen to be the student marshal for the College of Arts and Sciences for graduation? Would you believe me if I told you that you would become the first in your family to graduate from college? Would you believe me if I told you that you would turn out pretty OK?

You will start your college career as "just" a student. Learning little details about how to navigate your classes, scheduling your time, balancing work and your personal life, and more importantly, learning about yourself. You will be guided by strong mentors, some of whom will be your own peers. You will learn new skills, some academic, some social, and will eventually use them as you make the transition from a student to becoming a mentor yourself. But don't think you will stop learning there. You will learn more about yourself and how to solve problems as a leader than you ever did as "just" a student. Here's a piece of information that has stuck to me over the last few years: you will never stop being a student. We are always taking in new information, molding and interpreting it, and using it to create new knowledge within ourselves. Embrace it.

You still have four years of your undergrad left, but make sure to cherish every boring moment, every happy moment, every up, and every down, because as soon as you know it, you will be preparing to walk the stage, realizing not only your dreams but the dreams of your family, of your loved ones, of your friends, of your teachers, and all of those who believed in you as you progressed through some of the most difficult, but inspiring years of your life.

Remember this, you will feel lost at times, but that's okay. Being lost means that you were meant to take a different path than the one you were originally on. We are all writing our own stories, make sure you write a masterpiece.

Congratulations Gustavo