

Kasey Le

In my four years at University High School, I have learned that you can plan the little aspects of your life like your classes, your schedule, and your extracurricular activities, but you cannot plan for the friends, the coaches, the teachers, and the moments that will change your life in the smallest and greatest of ways. Essentially, the one thing you can expect out of life is the unexpected.

As freshmen, we all came to U-High a little cautious, and some of us arrived absolutely terrified. The room numbers were out of order, and there were so many hidden stairwells I could have sworn we were at Hogwarts. Besides being a labyrinth of hallways, U-High was also a place of unfamiliar faces, new responsibilities, and refreshing freedoms.

You learn early on that high school can be one of two things. It can be an opportunity to define yourself, or you can let it define you. Hopefully, for all of us it was the former. Especially since this school offers such incredible possibilities to learn about yourself. U-High, along with the extracurricular opportunities we have, defined my interests, evoked my passions, and established my priorities. As U-High graduates, our experiences are a priceless asset as we prepare for the uncertain future before us. While others are struggling to find themselves, we already enter the next four years of our lives with a strong sense of self and a clear vision for who we each can become.

I also believe that the faculty at U-High is another advantage we hold above other high school graduates. The teachers here have a remarkable skill. They not only pass on first-hand experience and extensive knowledge, but enthusiasm that is contagious. Even though we've all shared some laughs about the more eccentric teachers here at U-High, there is no denying that they all have a sincere passion for what they do, and it is difficult not to share in their excitement.

One of the best classes I took at U-High was Computer Aided Design with Mr. Dearing my sophomore year. It was my first technology class, and it opened my eyes to a world outside of the core curriculum. Now unfortunately, the material I learned in this class has somehow all blurred together, but I do remember one thing clearly. If we had worked diligently throughout the week, we would have a class discussion on Fridays. No topic was off limits and no institution was safe. The more controversial – the better. Politics, religion, school curriculum, and even the insanity that surrounds Prom came under fire. Regardless, even the most apathetic students had their beliefs questioned, their curiosities sparked, and their intellects engaged.

Even though I sometimes got frustrated and angry, I took away one very important fact. We, high school students, have opinions. We have convictions. We have ideas that could one day be revolutionary. We are still at that pivotal age where we are all optimists, even if we will not admit it. We can ignore the negative world the media paints for us and instead see the world for what it could be. The energy shortage is not crisis but an opportunity to tap into the magic of chemistry and engineering to revolutionize the way people interact with and respond to the environment. The economic downturn is not a depression but a chance to fix the fundamental errors in our capitalistic society and initiate better relations with foreign markets. We do not have a catastrophe on our hands, we have a challenge. As the legendary Bono so aptly put it, "...this is the time for bold measures and this is the country and you are the generation." And because of our time here at U-High, this graduating class has been well prepared to rise to that challenge.

I will always have a devoted respect and love for this school. It doesn't matter that the gym leaks, that the ceiling tiles are missing, and that the steps to the pit have all but corroded away. This school is not just a building. It is a family of students and teachers with a sincere intellectual vitality coming together to celebrate curiosity. High school is not just a transcript. It is everything – the friends, the coaches, the teachers, and the moments that brought us to this stage.

We would not be here on our own. This achievement is thanks in large part to our fellow classmates, our encouraging friends, our inspiring teachers, and our ever-supportive parents. And while I am grateful that I do not have to say

goodbye to my closest of friends because I know we will always keep in touch, I find it difficult and even impossible to say goodbye to everyone else – the classmates that I have walked the halls with day in and day out for four remarkable years. We did not all become best of friends, but that's not the point. Each of us has shaped, encouraged, influenced, and inspired each other in the smallest and greatest of ways, and that is something stronger than friendship.

Even though all of us will head off in our own direction, we will always have the same beginning. And even though all of us will leave U-High today, I know we will carry on the University High School name by being Pioneers on the cutting edge of our respective fields, drawing on the tools and resources we have gained from our time here at U-High. The celebrated anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, caring people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." For this graduating class, I fully believe that it is not a question of *if* we will accomplish great things – it is merely a question of *how many*. Contrary to my opening remarks, not everything is unexpected. You *can* expect great things from the class of 2009.