



### Valedictorian Speech – May 20, 2017

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to the Commencement ceremony for The Orme School's Class of 2017. I would also like to thank every single person for participating in this meaningful day. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate each of my fellow classmates for this significant accomplishment. Our families and we ourselves should be proud of this benchmark that we have reached.

We are finally stepping out of our comfort zones and, from now on, we will be engaged in individually developing our own future. Last, but not least, a very special thanks goes to the faculty members who honored me with this ambitious award and allowed me to give this speech on behalf of the Class of 2017.

Attending a school with such international diversity mostly means that every single one of us has had to adapt ourselves in order to benefit from a multicultural environment like this. Moreover, comparing ourselves to students from other countries gives us the right incentives to aspire towards higher goals. During the two years that I have been here, I have become more deeply integrated with students from all around the world. I have collaborated with them both inside and outside of the classroom. We arrange group studies, where every student's contribution enriches everybody else's knowledge. Sharing accommodations and food and competing together in athletics and outdoor adventures are just a few ways that I have been integrating with youngsters from all around the world.

However, it was not so straightforward to get to this point, considering that I was not even supposed to spend more than five months at this school. Between the first time I stepped into the desert at 2am after a 24-hour trip, and now standing here giving this speech, I have grown as a student, as an athlete and as a person overall. I have to admit that some beliefs that I had before walking into this reality are now completely changed. Even my Italian friends who used to ask me at least twice a day if there were cheerleaders, lockers, a mean girls table or even the big yellow school busses, have finally understood that Orme is an absolutely different place.

Starting from the number of friendly people who helped me to understand Mr. Hoskins' accent, which by the way did not happen until after three months, to the teachers that never let me down even though my speaking and proper writing skills were those of a third grader, and that supported me throughout the whole experience. I truly appreciate my cheerful classmates who started by helping me and ended up referring to me for any sort of doubt they had. Everyone and everything contributed to this adventure in a meaningful way, even the spiders in the shower, or waking up at 6am since day one because of the sunlight.

I came in as junior, and I was half an Italian student and half a classical ballet dancer, and I ended up as a senior in this remarkable community. Meanwhile, I learned how to properly express myself in English,

gained 20 pounds that I fortunately lost later on, ate a pineapple pizza, played volleyball, basketball and soccer, experienced four lessons of wrestling at 6am with Mr. Lehn, had dinner at 5:30pm every day, which is not even snack time in Italy. Moreover, I had the luck of spending Christmas and Easter at my American friends' house. Thanks to this wonderful school system, I got to take six AP exams, which contributed to my acceptances from three of the most renowned European business schools. And, finally, I learned the true meaning of meritocracy, which barely exists in the Italian school system, and the most wonderful thing is that I got to share this with marvelous classmates and faculty members.

The value of education varies from country to country, and I have experienced it myself, and we all agree that the value that Orme has given to us is extraordinarily unique. On behalf of the Senior Class of 2017, I thank every single member of the faculty staff who makes this education more valuable every day.

For my fellow classmates, we all had that experience where we thought we were going to get kidnapped on our drive from the airport to Orme, the dusty road... The horse fences, the dark and quiet scenario, and the long drive, it is something straight out of horror movies. But we can all agree that not all of the students are brave or lucky enough to live this experience and turn it into a positive outcome. It is our time now to become a more integrated part of the world and take life by the horns.

Therefore, this is not the end, this is the beginning!

**Lucrezia Leone '17**