



NEW MEXICO MILITARY INSTITUTE

Office of the President / Superintendent

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TO: NMMI Alums and Parents

FROM: MG Jerry W. Grizzle

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Re: End of School Reflection

Last week, every area of campus was alive with graduation activities, cadets finalizing exams, packing their bags for the trip home, wondering where they will be next year – back to the Institute, on to the next stop in their education, or any other point in the individual journey to their future. The faculty and staff are no different, putting the finishing touches on another successful year and looking forward to the summer hiatus and to what it will/can hold for them. It's that specific Institute time that's been repeated each year by each yearly edition of the Corps of Cadets – the time of change. Two recent activities involving our cadets reminded me of that again.

Mary Beth Atwood, an NMMI Science teacher, shared with me the exam response by a Cadet. Mary Beth asked the question below and then prompted the Cadets with some examples that were important in her life.

"I gave my ecology class this extra credit question. Caelyn Lapahe's response gave me tears, literally. I wanted to share it with you.

This was my question: Tell me things you learned from your parents or other family members that you'll carry with you for the rest of your life. For example, my grandad taught me to saddle a horse and change a tire. My aunt taught me to make a good red enchilada. My mother taught me to walk like you own the place...even if you hurt inside, hold your head up and walk like you own the place. My kids taught me that mean words stick and you can never take them back. Tell me some life lessons you have learned.

This is Caelyn's response:

'Some major life lessons I learned this year are that life is unpredictable, stay open minded and positive. There are always new beginnings, you shouldn't care what others think, you only live once, your experience is yours, and anything is possible.

After graduating high school, I did not know what I wanted in life but now want to do so much with my life. Since coming to NMMI, I have experienced so much more than I have, than I did on the reservation. I have become interested in continuing my education, a lot of future fields and future career paths. My initial plan when coming to NMMI was to just get an AS degree and go back to the reservation, to work for the Indian Health Services.

I've realized, the reservation does not have to be within my limits of exploration, and I can explore more of what the world has to offer. Being away from home has made me



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stronger mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. My goals in life have definitely shifted every semester, and I'm starting to figure out what I want to experience, who I am, and where I want to go.

Before starting this semester, I had a serious talk with my parents about what I was going to do after graduating NMMI. They told me they were so proud that I am going to finish and continue schooling. Not a lot of people on the reservation complete high school or continue onto college, so that was very motivating to hear, especially from my parents. I am going to continue ROTC and study biology at Norwich University in the fall.

Every day I call my parents to vent or let them know what's going on. I always go to my dad for advice. He taught me life is not always going to go according to plan, people come and go, there will be happy times, and very sad times. You can live in despair or deal with your emotions, and move on. It's all up to you.

Now that my time is coming to an end at NMMI, I have learned a lot about life, myself, and continue to view life as my dad is. With a positive outlook, an open mind, thankful for the people and experiences along the way.

One piece of advice that I will always follow is yolo (you only live once), my dad has told me he regrets not continuing college or leaving the reservation. He loves his life but he always tells me "yolo". Now I live life taking advantage of the many wonderful opportunities given. I am very grateful he has given me an opportunity at having a great life and I hope to be as patient, caring, and enlightened as he is."

I try very hard to be a student of NMMI history. When I read Cadet Lapahe's thoughts reminded me of something I had read in the 1917-1918 NMMI catalog:

"The object of the Institute is not simply to prepare students for college or for business, but to prepare them for manhood. Its chief aim is the formation of character, the cultivation of sound principles of truth and honor, the symmetrical development of the mind and body. The atmosphere is one of equality; the environment a continual reminder that worth and merit, virtue and integrity, courage, and kindred attributes of a noble manhood are the essentials of success. It is the aim of the Institute to return to society intelligent, honest, able-bodied, and progressive citizens."

I believe Cadet Lapahe's response is a direct testament to the fact that 105 years after the NMMI catalog made the above declaration, that NMMI is still producing Cadets in this image.

We market the fact that we utilize the "whole person" approach at NMMI. We have to develop the mind (academics), the body (physical fitness) and the spirit (character). They are three principles that are not negotiable and not separable. There are over 30 verses in the Bible that talk about a cord of three



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strands. Probably the most quoted is Ecclesiastes 4:12; "and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not easily broken."

This concept was highlighted again in the recent speech given by a five year Cadet and former Regimental Commander, when he addressed the Third Class at their Class dinner. Jose Vindiola Sicre began his remarks with the statement that change is inevitable. He explained that the minute he left NMMI as a Junior College graduate, change occurred in his life. He no longer had the security of NMMI to wake him up in the morning, tell him when to go to sleep at night, feed him three meals a day, etc. He had to change and do those things for himself. He went to a four-year university. He had to change, he had to adapt to their way of conducting business. He did. He graduated and was hired into the business world. Change again occurred. He had to learn the new ways of his employer. He did, and he was successful. He was recognized by another employer and offered a promotion and a raise. Change again occurred.

He told the Third Class that when he returned, he did not expect to find NMMI the same way it was when he was here. He said, in fact, he would be disappointed if it was the same. He encouraged them to embrace change, while they were here and more so after they leave.

A quote from Muhammad Ali, that hangs in a prominent spot in my office, is indicative of what I believe the perspective on change should be:

"A man who views the world the same at fifty, as he did at twenty, has wasted 30 years of his life."

Cadets Lapahe and Vindola each in their own way seem to be saying the same. Their words show them to be representative of the character traits listed in that 1918-19 catalog, that NMMI has been charged to produce throughout each decade, and that carries on today. It's because of their NMMI experiences, each Cadet's experiences, that they are well equipped to meet the challenges of change in their futures as "intelligent, honest, able-bodied, and progressive citizens."

George Santayana may have best described how we prepare our Cadets to view the future:

"To be interested in the changing seasons is a happier state of mind than to be hopelessly in love with spring.