

**{Senior Convocation}****JMU is home***Madison, Mappys and my Senior Convocation speech* BY KRISTIN ALEXANDER ('11)

**1**,353 days ago we all sat together in this exact location for the first time. Today, we sit here as the Class of 2011, for the last time. Entering JMU, most of the faces in this room were unfamiliar and the names of the random people you became friends with on Facebook were just that — names of strangers. Today, that has changed. Today, you can walk around campus and share a smile with another member of our class for no reason. Today, you can be in an airport halfway across the world and hear a “Go Dukes” from a member of the JMU community. Today, that random person you “friended” in the summer before freshman year because you were both in the “JMU Class of 2011” Facebook group might still be a random person whom you share an awkward interaction with because you know you’re both friends on Facebook, but not in real life. ... But I digress.

The point is, we came here as strangers, but the past 1,353 days have changed that. Those days have given us shared experiences — in the classroom, in the community and in different places across the world. Those shared experiences do not have to stop simply because our time as Madison students is coming to a close.

When we first arrived at JMU, we were all given our JMU *Mappy* and told that it was our guide to 1787 Orientation. What if that *Mappy* was our guide to our four, or more, years at Madison?

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— KRISTIN ALEXANDER ('11)



(Above): Student Ambassador Kristin Alexander ('11) delivered the Senior Convocation student speech after her JMU *Mappy* themed speech was chosen by the commencement committee.



system. Along with that would be a tip advising you not to punch a hole in your JACard and hang it around your neck with a lanyard. Most of us would ignore this tip. After a trip home for the summer, you started to realize that you had come to think of JMU as your home.

Being away from campus would make you realize the things you took for granted, like the way people hold doors open and always seem to be happy. Sophomore year on your *Mappy* would be indicated by Bridgeforth Stadium. During this time, you were proud to wear your Class of 2011 shirt and may have perfected your streamer throwing techniques. Regardless of your interest in sports, you fully appreciated the exciting game-day atmosphere.

During junior year, academics seemed to be in the forefront of everyone’s mind. Most of us were immersed in classes for our major and the Club Carrier Library vs. Club East Campus Library battle was in full force. ECL held a rave that made news

around the country, earning a marker for our junior year.

The Quad would designate senior year on your *Mappy*. It’s the oldest area on campus. As seniors we could enjoy the entirety of it, for the first time. As senioritis fully set in, days lounging on the Quad were relished like never before.

So now what? Do we receive a *Mappy* for real life as we walk across the stage on Saturday? Unfortunately, the odds of that are not in our favor. The thing is, we don’t need them. Our four years at JMU have equipped us with everything we need to succeed — lifelong friendships, knowledge of our strengths, passion and enough free T-shirts to be able to avoid doing laundry for at least a month.

We can’t stop the time from ticking, but we can make sure the memories are with us forever. Using the past as our guide, we can surely embrace whatever it is that comes next. The important thing is to not be scared. Know that you are prepared and have the support of the entire Madison community for the rest of your life. **■**