

An Open Letter Offers Sage Advice: “Dear Pro-life College Student”

BY Amanda McClone

What is growing up about if not taking charge of your own future—which includes deciding what is important and what isn't—and then making the world a little better because you are there? Life is taking what you've learned and what you believe and changing that into action.

So you're pro-life? What will you do about it when you move from the security of a relatively small high school to what often is a gigantic, impersonal college? Glad you asked.

Getting ready to move on to the “big college experience” is exciting and maybe more than a little unnerving. Responsibility, freedom, and excitement were all words that were ringing in my mind as I was getting ready to start college. I was packing and deciding what to bring: clothes, sheets, computer, books, and the like.

But as corny as this will probably end up sounding, for me the most important thing to bring along were my pro-life beliefs.

One of the biggest differences from high school, where often everyone knows everyone, is not knowing where your fellow college students stand on the life issues. When I stepped foot at Marquette University, it was really important for me to make those pro-life connections. To be honest I was afraid I never would, if I didn't do it right away.

The following may help you understand your place, your responsibilities, and your privileges as a pro-lifer on a college campus.

1. Letting people know you're a pro-lifer:

I was curious how my roommate and people in my dorm felt about pro-life issues. By putting up a poster in my room that said “Life is precious,” there was an awfully good chance I'd find out.

Sure enough, I received many comments and engaged in a lot of great conversations. Many were from pro-lifers who otherwise probably never would have spoken up! But it was important that some were from pro-choicers, who wanted to genuinely debate the issues. Pro-lifers love to debate!

Either way, unique opportunities were now available to share information with my peers. This was especially true for the ones who didn't actually approach me—the people who were just there watching.

It can be tough to put yourself before a sometimes hostile public, but consider the cause we are advancing! Speak up; you never know what you can do and you never know who is listening.

2. Meet the connection: Finding the Students for Life group on campus and getting involved:

Knowing there was a "Students for Life" group on my campus, I searched them out. They welcomed me with open arms: Students for Life groups are always eager to meet and greet new members. I was nervous about not knowing anyone, but I made friends fast.

Abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, and other issues related to our cause come up all the time in college classrooms. I thought I had already learned a lot in high school, but it quickly became obvious that pro-life activities and speakers operated on a much higher level in college.

By expressing interest I was able to get involved right away, make tons of new pro-life friends, and find my niche on campus. And, just as in high school, it's reassuring to have peer support.

3. Create the connection: Starting a Students for Life group on your campus

But what about college campuses that do not have a pro-life presence? A lot of my pro-life friends from high school attended colleges without pro-life groups. Their answer? They started them on their campuses! You'd be surprised how easy it is to do this.

This allows you to bring up the issues, create interest, and just go for it! (Contact NRLC and/or local right to life chapters for information and assistance on starting your own group).

Keeping Active:

At my college there are a huge number of pro-lifers on the Students for Life email list and even more pro-lifers on campus not on the list. But as is the case with any organization, only a small percentage of those actually get involved.

You can choose to see the glass as half-full or half-empty. I think in terms of what might be, not what isn't.

I ask myself what would happen if every pro-life college student took an extra second to find a pro-life t-shirt to wear to class, or raised his or her hand when a pro-life issue came up in a lecture, or used a study break to attend a students for life meeting? What a colossal difference it would make!

I remember attending a pro-life convention where I heard a phrase that always runs through my mind when I am nervous about taking action: "If you don't speak up, what will happen? Nothing."

I'm just not willing to allow "nothing" to happen, and I suspect if you are reading this article, you aren't willing to settle for "nothing" either. Something has to happen because innocent lives are lost everyday to abortion and euthanasia. And that "something" can be you.

I'm not saying that it will always be easy. But what your peers are learning today, they will take with them into the workforce and pass on to their families. What message do you want them to hear?

I'd like to end by debunking the unwarranted generalization out there that young people are apathetic, or that they will just sit back and wait for someone else take action. Well, sure there are a lot of people out there like that of all ages, but I know that I am not one of them.

Neither are you. No matter where you go or what you do, you have to take what's important to you with you. If you are reading this, I am confident that speaking up for the innocent and vulnerable is near the top of your list.