MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY

501 East 38th Street
Erie, PA 16546
814-824-2000
800-825-1926
mercyhurst.edu

April 2023
Accepted Students Day Remarks to Centennial Class of 2026
By President Kathleen A. Getz, Ph.D.

Good morning. I am delighted to meet all of you—accepted students as well as parents, guardians, and friends who have nurtured these remarkable young people.

For those of you who are still undecided about your college choice, I'm confident today's visit will move the needle for you. And for those of you who have already made that very important decision, congratulations.

Either way, today we have planned a targeted experience for you to get a glimpse into life at Mercyhurst, prepare for the transition, and get your questions answered.

I'd like to take a moment to share some personal observations with you.

No doubt you have considered many options for your college education. Certainly, the basic building blocks of all universities are pretty much the same: **People, Programs, Campus Life.**

What differentiates universities is how they put these building blocks together, and how they add up to **Results.**

Let's start with **PEOPLE**. Students and alumni enthusiastically praise the relationships they develop with Mercyhurst faculty. This shows up in student surveys, reflections in the student newspaper, interviews with alumni, and polls taken by ranking organizations. Students and faculty relate here; there's a bond. And that's such a resource for you—whether you are struggling and need support, or you are thriving and need someone to help you reach the next level, you are never alone.

Even in online programs and courses, students find this connection. In a recent survey, one student said: "I have taken online courses at multiple other colleges, but never felt **supported and invested in** like I did with my courses at Mercyhurst."

The **PEOPLE** of Mercyhurst typically think about how they can respond to issues that others might think are too big and too complex for one person to make a difference. I think we inherited that mindset from the Sisters of Mercy, who founded our university nearly 100 years ago. They were pioneers who set the bar extremely high and, throughout history, Mercyhurst faculty and students have subscribed to that same sense of innovation and personal responsibility.

Consider biology professor Dr. Christopher Dolanc. Dr. Dolanc embraced the opportunity to share his appreciation for nature with his students ***AND*** respond to the larger global issue of climate change by planting a Tiny Forest on campus. In all, they planted seedlings for 649 trees in an area about the size of a tennis court. You can see this young forest – which right now looks like a mass of white stakes – just to the east of the main entrance to campus. As it grows, it will absorb carbon dioxide from the air, soak up storm water, provide a habitat for wildlife, and help reduce noise.

Mercyhurst is believed to be the first university in Pennsylvania, and one of few institutions in the U.S., to take this innovative step. Most Tiny Forests are planted in Europe and Asia where the concept originated.

This spirit of innovation is also found among our students. Consider senior Samantha Strom, who is double majoring in Intelligence Studies & Criminal Justice. Sam has gained real-world analyst experience as the project coordinator for Mercyhurst's Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Club.
One of Strom's first projects was writing victim and trafficker profiles for Brazil, where she identified signs of trafficking in various geographical locations. The report was published and translated in Portuguese and distributed among 10,000 law enforcement officers in Brazil for daily use.

Sam is doing the kind of meaningful work that we hope all our graduates do one day, and she is doing it as a college student.
Next, let's consider **PROGRAMS**. What is it about Mercyhurst's academic offerings that distinguishes the university?

The prevailing wisdom and research indicate a growing emphasis on career-ready degrees such as cybersecurity, intelligence, nursing, business, and data analytics. We have all those majors and many others. As innovators, we remain nimble in adapting our curriculum to meet the needs of our students in this ever-changing global environment.

Even as we cultivate these cutting-edge majors, we remain **true to our liberal arts tradition**. Why? Well, research ***also*** shows that employers often identify the creative and problem-solving skills traditionally associated with liberal arts majors as the most valuable attributes of new hires.

In this way, **Mercyhurst gives you the whole package**. And, as part of that package, every major provides its students with experiential learning opportunities, which range from internships and consulting projects to student teaching and service work. So, when you leave Mercyhurst, you don't just go with a GPA and a diploma in hand, you go with "experience" on your resume.

I'm sure you're also interested in **CAMPUS LIFE.**
Mercyhurst is a place where hospitality thrives. You – the real, authentic you – are welcome here. We invite you to become part of Mercyhurst and, in your own way, to help define what Mercyhurst is, because our mosaic is simultaneously grounded in tradition and ever-changing to reflect the both the needs and gifts our students bring.
We offer robust athletic programs, amazing performing arts, meaningful service opportunities, student-led professional and social clubs, travel abroad programs, and storied traditions, all on this beautiful and safe campus.

We always start our academic year with our Day of Service, when all new students board buses and are transported to various sites across Erie to perform service projects. In this way, you get to know your classmates and learn a little something about your new community.

One of our more recent traditions is the annual diversity walk we host each fall. This is an occasion to come together and celebrate our commitment to inclusiveness.

And surely you've heard about our students' favorite tradition - Hurst Day! Every fall, we surprise students with a wake-up call delivered by bagpipers who march through the corridors of our residence halls. Their piping is also played on loudspeakers across campus – even the deepest sleepers hear it. The pipes signal that classes are cancelled, and it's time to play.

We have a team treasure hunt, prizes, all kinds of games on the campus green, more than a dozen inflatables, a climbing wall, a zip line – and more. The day is devoted entirely to fun – and not just for students. Faculty and staff play as well. It is one of the many ways we build school spirit and camaraderie.

Together with your own hard work and creativity, our people, programs, and campus life lead to **RESULTS**.

We have a placement rate of over 94% within six months of graduation. Of those graduates, 76 percent are working and another 16% are continuing their education.

And that's just the beginning. We pride ourselves on being an institution that believes strongly in lifelong learning, and the career trajectory of many of our graduates over time reflects just that.

2001 Sports Medicine graduates and friends, Nick Potter and Greg Beato, are both living their dreams. Nick is director of High Performance and Sports Science for Duke Basketball and Greg, who went on to study medicine, is a team physician at Virginia Tech.

Those of you coming to Mercyhurst to study intelligence may have met Lindy Smart. Lindy earned three degrees from Mercyhurst – an AA and BA in English, followed by an MS in Applied Intelligence in 2011. She started at Target (a Fortune 500 company) as Sr. Analyst in Corporate Security. She earned several promotions over the years, eventually becoming Director of Competitive Intelligence for its nearly 2,000 stores. We count ourselves lucky that Lindy loved her alma mater so much that she has returned to lead the program from which she graduated. Just one year ago, she became executive director of the Department of Intelligence Studies.

Another notable graduate is John Melody. John was among our first students from Ireland. He earned his degree in Hospitality Management and started managing a local restaurant when he graduated. Today, he owns six Erie restaurants and also serves as a volunteer coach for women's soccer. Further, he helped to design The Roost, our very own Irish pub – which is available for all students through your meal plan.

I think you'll find, much like with the examples I just shared, that Mercyhurst is rich with opportunities to help you become your best self. We will nurture and inspire and prepare you to go out into our challenging world to live a life of joy – one that is filled with purpose and happiness – mindful that you are an essential part of something bigger than yourself.

Enjoy your day, and as we say at Mercyhurst, Carpe Diem!