Casie Damore

Senior Orator 2011
During my junior year, I had the privilege of listening to a motivational speaker by the name of Eric Hoffberg speak about his time in 2009 with the Chicago Blackhawks professional ice hockey team. That year, like many other teams I’m sure, the Blackhawks had a goal; they wanted to win the Stanley Cup. During one of their sessions, Eric asked the men how many wins it was going to take to win the championship. Many of the men answered with the most obvious answer of the number of games they had in their season; but Eric disagreed. He said to the men, if you want to win the Stanley Cup this year, you are going to have to redefine what it means to win. A win can no longer be just when you outscore your opponents during a game. A win has to be every time the entire team comes to practice and gives 110%. A win is every time you unite as a singular entity toward your goal. A win is every perfect pass, every caused turnover, every successful transition and every perfect check. He said to them, if you want to win the Stanley Cup this year, you are going to need to achieve a million wins. In 2009, the Blackhawks achieved their million wins and brought the Stanley Cup back to Chicago.

The motto “A million wins” has since become not only the slogan for my lacrosse team’s season this year but for me as an individual. But what achieving these “wins” does for me and my team is very different than what it does for me as a student and as a person. While a win for a team brings them closer as a unit, a win for a person separates them from the crowd. It defines them as an individual, distinct from the masses and helps them take pride in their journey toward achieving their own personal greatness.

Throughout our time at Geneseo, we have all had very different journeys. We have each had our own experiences that have shaped the paths we have taken to reach this day. Yet, despite
these differences, each of our paths has been scattered with similar moments. These moments were the times throughout our careers that have brought us closer to becoming the bright, success bound, academics that we are today. These special moments that have shaped us, helped us to mature and helped us overcome the challenges that Geneseo has presented, are the “wins” that we need to take note of.

A win for us was staying up with our readings or homework for class, spending a Friday or Saturday night in “Club Milne” (the commonly known nick name for our Milne Library) instead of going to the IB, or realizing what our academic passions are or are not. These wins mark the times when we put in that small amount of extra effort to excel exponentially. They are the markers of our journey toward the high level of academic excellence that Geneseo expects of their graduates; and that we can finally say we have achieved.

During our time at Geneseo, though, we have not only grown as academics, but as people. Those times when we realized what kind of men and women we wanted to be, when we realized those qualities we possess apart from our friends, teammates, sorority and fraternity sisters and brothers and classmates that separate us as individuals. A win is a time when we took another under our wing and helped them or a time when we gave back to this community. A win was a time when we stepped outside of our comfort zone and broke racial, sexist or classist thinking. These are the times that each of us should recognize as moments we learned to not associate with a group, a team or an academic major, but instead, stand alone and define ourselves by the innate qualities that make us unique.

In the next year, each of us will embark on our own personal journeys, free from the influence of Geneseo, parents and peers. Some of us may be going on to further our degrees,
some may be entering into the workforce, some traveling the world or maybe moving home. Regardless of your plans, make it a point to recognize the moments, the wins, that are helping you move forward to the next chapter of your lives and the moments that are bringing you closer to achieving your dreams. Recognize these wins and use them as your motivation. Use these moments as your reassurance, your top grade or the praise you used to get from your teachers, family and friends. These wins will become your support and will help you to set in motion the driving force behind your ultimate goal: That force being yourself. Now, you have to be your own biggest fan. You are the only one that will keep you striving for greatness, and recognizing the little things you do to achieve that greatness on a day to day basis will foster that continued motivation. At this point, our world is at our fingertips, and now it is our job to decide what we want that world to consist of.

To our professors, thank you for your support. Without your help and guidance, we would not have achieved the level of academic prowess we are celebrating today.

To our parents, guardians, family and friends, don’t hesitate today to tell us how proud you are. Today we have achieved greatness. We have accomplished a tall feat, and no matter what we have said in the past, your support has helped us and means so much to us.

And to my classmates, walk a little taller today. Take pride in your journey, your achievements, and most importantly, yourselves. Congratulations on today. Congratulations on your journeys. And congratulations on what I am sure will be one of many wins.