

**Athletics Banquet Keynote Address**  
**Nenye OKORO, Duchesne Class of 2014**  
**May 10, 2024**

HELLO, everyone! It's an absolute pleasure to be here with you today, celebrating this special occasion. Many thanks to Alye for reaching out to me earlier this year. Truly an occasion that's going to make my year! But congratulations to all the student athletes in the room today; you all should be extremely proud of what you have achieved.

For those who don't know me, my name is Nenye Okoro, and I'm an alum of Duchesne, having graduated 10 years ago this year. It's hard to believe that a decade has passed since I was in your shoes. Time truly flies, and Duchesne holds a special place in my heart, as it was not only MY home, but also my sister's for many years. In fact, my journey here began in Pre-K, and over those 14 years, Duchesne shaped me in countless ways, and I'm sure many of you can agree to this testament. The memories and lessons learned within these walls will stay with you long after you leave, just as they have for me.

A little bit about my journey since graduating from Duchesne - I went on to study Health Informatics for my undergraduate degree while playing Division I volleyball. Now, I live in Austin, TX, working at Google as an Engineering Program Manager, and I am completing my master's in computer science with an emphasis in Artificial Intelligence from the University of Southern California.

As I reflected on what to talk about today, I kept coming back to the *Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart* and how these Goals serve as the foundation of who I am today and who I was in sports. I will speak on three of these Goals - Active Faith, Intellectual Values, and Personal Growth - and how leading with these Goals continues to be front and center in my everyday life.

First, Active Faith has been a guiding light in my life, both on and off the court. It has taught me the importance of having a strong moral compass, being compassionate, and serving others. In sports, having an active faith translates into being a supportive teammate, leading by example, and maintaining a disciplined headspace. One of my favorite coaches always said Playing any sport is 75% a mental game and 25% consistency with your physical ability. I am a strong believer that everything you do outside the court drives the outcome of the match, game or even practice. When your faith is at the root of your routine, you're not alone in this preparation - the Lord sees you through and makes the difficult decisions easy.

Second, Intellectual Values have been a driving force in my personal and professional growth. Duchesne instilled in me a love for learning, critical thinking, and most importantly the pursuit of knowledge. The world is constantly changing, with new professions consistently emerging, so it's important to be nimble and fall in love with the process of

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change. As a result, these values have been instrumental in my academic journey. As an athlete, intellectual values translated to being a strategic player and analyzing the game. All this to say, intellectual thinking has a number of practical applications in our everyday lives. By embracing and finding joy in intellectual pursuits, we can enrich our experiences and make life more engaging and fulfilling.

Personal growth is an ongoing journey that demands the adoption of a growth mindset. In the realm of sports, each and every one of you has likely encountered this firsthand. When you face tough competition, grueling training sessions, or the disappointment of a loss, it is this very mindset that allows you to build this muscle of perseverance, which in turn, enables you to come back stronger. Embracing a growth mindset in sports enables you to continually evolve as an athlete, pushing your limits and striving for new heights. This figurative muscle, when applied beyond the sports arena has the power to transform your personal growth journey into a lifelong pursuit of self-improvement and resilience. Now in my personal and professional life, growth is about taking on new challenges, stepping into leadership roles, and being open to feedback. It's recognizing that growth often happens outside our comfort zones while being willing to take risks and learn from both successes and failures.

As I reflect on my journey, the Sacred Heart Goals have been more than just guiding principles – they've been the foundation upon which I've built my life. They've shaped my character, my values, and my approach to challenges and opportunities on and off the court.

To all the student-athletes here today, I encourage you to embrace these Goals and let them guide you on your own unique paths. Whether you're on the court, in the classroom, or pursuing your passions, remember that an active faith, fostering intellectual values, and personal growth will serve as your north star, helping you navigate life with purpose, resilience, and a commitment to making a positive difference.

Thank you all for your time this evening, and congratulations to the graduating class of 2024!