

My name is Nick Kikuchi and I am a senior Bioengineering major from San Jose, CA.

Though I live a mere 20 minutes away, I never attended Preview Day. I never toured a college or knew what questions to ask, I didn't know what size school I wanted or what I was even looking for. My high school has a graduation rate of around 65% where 40% of students qualify to apply to a 4 year university. I didn't know what it was like to go to private school, I couldn't tell you what a Jesuit or even what mass was. As I am sure most of you can relate, I was unsure.

As a student of color, I was intimidated coming to a university where there was a stark difference in the ethnic diversity of the school. I went to an extremely diverse high school, so I wasn't used to being surrounded by individuals who all did not look like me. The Jesuit philosophy emphasizes educating the whole person and becoming holistic individuals with a variety of experiences, skills, and passions. And so, when I shared my uncertainties with others, I was embraced with love, compassion and support. The Jesuits allowed me to be ok with my uncertainty, and helped me explore and find my place on this campus.

My fall quarter of sophomore year was filled with great academic struggle. The President of a large medical device company told me that I had made a mistake in my major and I again started questioning my entire SCU experience. Was I smart enough to be an engineering major? Was I smart enough to be at SCU? I remember going to 2 of my professors after failing a 2nd midterm in both of their classes. And you know what happened? Both sat down with me and told me that I was driven and intelligent, that one grade does not dictate my future. I vividly remember one looking me straight in the eye and saying, "hey...you got 10% better than the first midterm. That looks like a win to me!" Though the Jesuit philosophy emphasizes striving for excellence, it also emphasizes compassion. Throughout the university, our faculty and staff embody this principle.

Because of the support I received from this community, I gained enough confidence to explore and find where I belonged on campus. I was hired as a Community Facilitator, our equivalent of a Resident Assistant (RA), where I worked to support each of my residents, traveled abroad and interned for a sustainable architecture firm based in Cochabamba, Bolivia through the Global Fellows program, and immersed myself in the Navajo Nation through an Immersion trip held through our Ignatian Center. My experiences are essential to my SCU experience and are the foundation for my love of my time in college.

As my time at the university is coming to an end, I often find myself talking with my friends about our dreams both past and present. We all came here with the dream of finding our niche and discovering those who we truly connect with. We dreamt of starting and owning our own company, of traveling internationally across the world, and of succeeding beyond our wildest imaginations. Yet as we grew, we realized our weaknesses. We tried. We failed. And we stood back up anyways and tried again. In my

time at SCU, I fell. I fell so hard I didn't think it was possible to get up. Yet, because of this community, I found the courage to stand, face my failure, and grow.

As once the individual who struggled in school and finding his niche, I have succeeded far beyond what I initially thought possible. I thought that nobody would want to hire me, yet I am lucky enough to have interned at Genentech and will be returning in the fall for full-time employment. So, if I can do it, all of you can too. So, to the Class of 2022, I wish you good luck and to quote the mantra of the Silicon Valley: Fail quickly and Fail often.