



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

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WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

I didn't study a foreign language until high school, when I took Latin and Spanish for 4 years each.

OF ALL THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES, WHAT DREW YOU SPECIFICALLY TO LATIN?

Latin grammar came easily to me, having learned English grammar very well in grade school. I also appreciated how Latin's structure is so different from a modern language's, like English or Spanish. I should say that grammar is grammar (subjects, direct objects, etc.) in any language, but Latin's structure is much more complex than the modern languages I've studied.

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO TRY TO MAKE LATIN EDUCATION YOUR CAREER?

About halfway through Latin II in high school, Mrs. D'Angelo asked me to tutor Latin I students, and in those tutoring sessions, I realized I had a knack for teaching the language. My senior year, I even held group

tutoring sessions after school once a week with 5-7 students. That mini-class atmosphere and the responsiveness of those students made me know that teaching Latin was my thing. It also didn't hurt that I got a perfect score on the National Latin Exam in my junior year.

CAN YOU GIVE US AN INTERESTING LATIN FUN FACT?

I suppose the "hippest" thing about Latin in 2013 is that Pope Francis tweets daily in Latin under his Latin name, Papa Franciscus (@Pontifex_In). His Latin writing style is actually pretty cool to dissect from a grammarian's standpoint; he makes interesting stylistic choices in word choice and word order, which only add to the depth of his messages.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT TEACHING AT HOLY CROSS?
Cheeseburger Wednesdays! Just kidding. I've always been amazed at the sense of community one feels at Holy Cross. It's like an extension of my family, which I felt as a student here and now as a faculty member. Administrators, (now fellow) teachers, students, and staff alike have always supported me, and I couldn't be more appreciative of that.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TEACHING AT THE SAME SCHOOL YOU ATTENDED?

It's not as weird as you may think. Many of my friends, and even some students, ask me this question all the time, but it's not weird or awkward in any way. In fact, I've found that the experiences I had as a student have made collaboration with the rest of the faculty easier. It's also nice to be in a familiar environment at the start of my teaching career because I'm already familiar with the school's policies, procedures, etc.

YOU CAME BACK TO TEACH AT HOLY CROSS FOUR YEARS AFTER YOUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HOLY CROSS TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT OUR SCHOOL?
I've heard many people in the school say it best: Holy Cross is one of our area's best kept secrets. We have stellar academics, athletics, and opportunities for involvement and leadership experience, all in a small, close-knit school community. It really is a unique experience.

IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER IN FOUR WORDS OR LESS, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

It's only the beginning.

IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ANY THREE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, WHO WOULD THEY BE AND WHY?

(1) Eddie Vedder, lead singer from the band Pearl Jam. He's been part of one of the world's biggest rock bands over the last 20 years, and I'd consider myself a big fan. I'm sure these things would make for interesting conversation about music, social issues, and life in general.

(2) Paul O'Neill, former right fielder for the New York Yankees. He was always my favorite player when I was growing up, and his toughness, energy, and passion made him a fan-favorite

and the heart and soul of the late-90s/early-2000s Yankees dynasty.

(3) Jon Stewart, host of The Daily Show. Despite having what he calls a "fake news program," Jon Stewart does an excellent job of satirizing politics and the news outlets that report it. Especially in today's discouraging political climate, it's almost refreshing to see someone give politicians and news outlets the ridicule they too often deserve. I think this kind of humor is part of the process of accepting the unfortunate political status quo. I also think he and Eddie Vedder would get along very well at dinner.



HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

Success is what you want it to be. If you want it to be based solely on a dollar amount, so be it, but consider whether you are truly fulfilled by what you do. Too many "successful" people aren't fulfilled. I'd like to see more people – their situation permitting, of course – do what they want to do, not what they think will bring in the most money.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK OR AUTHOR?

If it hasn't already, my true nerd self will come out now. I love Charles Jenney's First Year Latin book. Yes, the textbook. Honestly, I have read that book more than any other. It's such a comprehensive text on Latin grammar, and it

has certain nostalgic value as the Latin book from which I first learned and from which I now have the pleasure to teach.

HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR CATHOLIC EDUCATION SHAPED WHO YOU ARE TODAY?

I can't say enough about the numerous opportunities Holy Cross gave me with respect to academics, athletics, and leadership. I was always challenged in the classroom, given opportunities on the baseball field, and allowed to do so much in the student council that because of my many experiences, I finished my 4 years as a well-rounded self-manager with a clear direction going into college.

HOW DID YOUR CATHOLIC EDUCATION PREPARE YOU ACADEMICALLY FOR COLLEGE?

I'm still amazed at how much of an advantage I had in college over students from other schools, especially in the areas of writing, critical thinking, self-management, and study skills, all of which I attribute to my experiences and opportunities at Holy Cross.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

I'll never forget my second-last baseball game at Holy Cross, in which we beat previously-undefeated Blue Ridge in the playoffs. I went 4-4 with a home run and 6 RBIs. It was fulfilling to see my hard work and dedication over 4 years of baseball pay off at a time when it mattered most.

WHY DO YOU FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS TO LEARN LATIN?

Latin is too often dismissed as a subject because it is no longer a spoken language. Unlike other languages, though, an intense study of Latin,

like we have at Holy Cross, shows its true value. It is a mind-trainer; translating a Latin sentence is an exercise in logical thinking. It expands English vocabulary; sixty percent of English words come from Latin, so learning Latin roots gives students an advantage as they encounter more advanced reading and writing in high school, college, and beyond. Latin is prominent in the fields of medicine and law, with both direct and indirect applications. I could go on and on about the importance of Latin, but these are just some of the highlights.

WHO IS YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION?

I have a few. First, my parents have always pushed me to do well in whatever I am expected to do and whatever I put my mind to. My father, especially with schoolwork and baseball, instilled in me that I should never settle; I should always work hard and try to get better every time I do something. My mother, a 1st grade teacher in the Diocese of Scranton, showed me how much a teacher could love his/her job. After so many years in the profession, she still has a desire to teach, solely for her students and for the joy and fulfillment she gets from teaching them. Second, Mrs. D'Angelo, my Latin teacher of 4 years and now my colleague in the language department, gave me my passion for Latin. She gave me such a great foundation in the language and got me started in tutoring, which led to my decision to become a teacher.

HOW HAS YOUR TEACHING BACKGROUND INFLUENCED YOUR ROLE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?

Since I see teaching as passing on knowledge and experience and guiding students' development of certain skills, I've found that things aren't much different in coaching. This year, I had the pleasure this fall to coach Holy Cross's fall baseball team, my first coaching experience. Having played baseball for 4 years

each at both the high school and collegiate levels, I've had numerous experiences, successes, and failures. I feel it would be a waste not to pass on my athletic knowledge and experiences to a batch of young student-athletes.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OUR STUDENTS TODAY?

Take control of your own success. Don't make excuses or blame others when you fail or when things get rough. Hard work and perseverance will pay off. Try to see the value in everything, even if (and especially when) what you're doing is challenging.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE COACHING AND TEACHING?

Coaching is just like teaching a sport. On the ballfield, I always try to identify areas for improvement to make the kids better ballplayers. It isn't always easy, though. Just like in class, it takes some kids more time than others to correct mistakes and bad habits. My approach is always to guide them to the proper way of doing something and then to give them multiple ways and opportunities to make the corrections. Without a doubt, it is very rewarding to see a kid accept instruction, genuinely work hard to improve, and then find success. This is true for both the classroom and the ballfield.

CAN YOU GIVE US YOUR FAVORITE LATIN QUOTE?

Rident stolidi verba Latina. "Fools mock the Latin language." –the Roman poet Ovid. I have found that those who criticize Latin as useless are those who don't understand, or don't want to understand, its countless benefits or are simply trying to justify their own laziness because the language is challenging to learn. How foolish!

Do you have someone that you would like to nominate for an alumni spotlight feature?

Email alumni@hchspsa.org with their current contact information and we would be happy to get in touch with them for one of our features!