

Emma Wolfarth Marshall '14
Senior Class President
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Welcome Classmates, Friends, Family, Faculty, and Distinguished Guests, I am truly honored to stand here before you as the Class of 2014's somewhat democratically elected Empress.

When I was eight years old I attended horseback riding camp. Even after a couple of days I was too afraid to ride one of the fast moving ponies by myself so I volunteered to ride the older, more experienced horse all the other kids were completely uninterested in.

So I got on the horse and we all rode into the woods and my horse—unsurprisingly—lagged far behind the others. My horse and I finally made it to an idyllic clearing and this horse came to a complete stop, and died—right there underneath me.

You know, I must have sat on that horse—confused, completely alone, and a little bit hungry for upwards of 30 minutes before someone found me and removed me from the dead animal.

Now as you can imagine, since that day I have made it a priority in my life to never go horseback riding ever again.

And yet, as I stand alone at this podium staring up at confusingly whimsical blue and white truffle trees... I feel like that eight-year-old version of myself again—confused, alone, and moderately hungry.

The great philosopher Dawson Leary, in the life-affirming text Dawson's Creek once said, "It's interesting how people use that expression, 'life and death'. As if to imply that life is the opposite of death, but birth is the opposite of death... life, has no opposite".

EGOT winner and descendent of lazy Susan herself Tracy Jordan, in the slightly less life-affirming text 30 Rock, preached that one should "Live every week like it's shark week".

I bring up these quotes not to make you question the eternal wisdom of James Van Der Beek but because most of the life advice I can give you comes from syndicated television.

And so in this speech, I will instead talk about something that Pomona has truly given me a deeper understanding of: breakfast food.

I entered Pomona College with the naive belief that it would be a paradisiacal breakfast buffet that would be so easy to navigate that I would miraculously transform into a better breakfast food eater.

I was so sure that in a place where I could choose anything and everything, satisfaction would come as easily as the walk from Blaisdell to Frank.

Instead, I had no miraculous moment of transformation and just like in high school—freshman year I mostly just skipped breakfast entirely.

I came back sophomore year with a plan though, I was going to become a yogurt person. You know the kind of person I'm talking about?

The one who never needs the snooze button and hardly even needs an alarm clock at all because they are so in control of their lives—so happy with themselves and the person that

other people see them as—that each day, getting up for breakfast before it closes at 10 am is not a struggle.

Because they know they are going to make all the right choices about what they should eat, how much they should eat, and who they should eat it with.

But while I had my yogurt days—I spent most of that year learning that I was not a yogurt person.

And by the beginning of junior year, I resolved to find my own true identity as an eater of breakfast foods.

I started experimenting with waffles. And then I tried the omelet line, and then the smoothies, and even the vegan sausage. And it was mostly more satisfying than yogurt, but there was nothing that I loved enough to eat seven days a week. Yet for the first time at Pomona, breakfast was consistently good.

Senior year I have realized that there is no single breakfast food that I love exclusively; it is the variety that I truly love.

It is the options, the buffet, the ability to wake up one morning and eat ALL the bacon and eggs and wake up the next and be genuinely satisfied with a cup of yogurt, and then the next day to wake up at noon just roll out of bed and transition my pajamas into daywear with no breakfast at all.

Because after all there is no place that offers a more diverse menu—either for breakfast—or for the rest of life than Pomona College.

As college students we have been confronted with choices each and every day—some big, some small, and some in-between. And even though every one of those choices has been an opportunity for us to learn who we are, they do not need to define who we will be.

We've have now reached the point in this speech where I must tie together an anecdote about a dead horse and an overly extended metaphor about breakfast food.

So here it goes...

After my journey of self-discovery at Pomona, I feel certain that just as I am no longer the sophomore who tried to eat yogurt every day for breakfast—I am also no longer the paralyzed little girl who sat starving on a dead horse, just because she thought it was what she was supposed to do.

I'm grateful to Pomona for that because Pomona has given me the strength to make my own choices, define my own identity, and get off that damn horse.

And as I stand here... still confused, still alone at this podium, and increasingly hungry... I am no longer content to just wait... instead I ask all of you... when and where is lunch?