

**Breakfast with the Deans**  
**University of Missouri–St. Louis**

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Good morning everyone, and welcome to the Breakfast with the Deans.

I was honored to be asked to join you, as I am a former student of UMSL's Advanced Credit Program. Four years ago, I began researching universities and scheduling tours, and UMSL was just not on my radar. The only thing I knew about the institution was that I was enrolled in this Credit Program. So, when I received the invitation to this breakfast, I simply thought, "Hey, free food. I'm in."

My parents and I drove up here [from Festus] without knowing that I would meet the people who would change my life. After just one hour or so with these amazing people sitting among you, I was sold on this university.

I had not registered for UMSL Day, but I was told to attend anyway to see what the campus had to offer. Although I had not come prepared to walk around in the wind – it was miserably cold that day – I still loved it.

By the end of my junior year of high school, I had applied to the UMSL and the financial aid office had helped me find enough scholarships to afford tuition. I was set. Nonetheless, I still accepted the next year's invitation to the dean's breakfast.

My dad had hoped that we would have a chance to speak with now Interim Provost Chris Spilling and Vice Provost Curt Coonrod, the two men he fondly remembers as "the chemist with an accent" and "the guy with candy in his office." Although

we did not meet them again, we spoke to so many other wonderful people that I decided to attend UMSL Day again; I was too excited to make this place my home.

When I finally graduated high school with my 85 classmates and moved into Oak Hall, I was nervous that I would get lost at this public university and as a result, not be as engaged as I would have hoped. Fortunately, I met people who pushed me to join one of the ensembles on campus, to study abroad in Costa Rica, to complete the Emerging Leaders Program, to find a job with Residential Life and, finally, to run for President of the Student Government Association.

My friends and I have accomplished a lot these past two and a half years. I've seen them become executive members of their organizations, land internships with government offices, work 12-hour shifts at the hospital, and conduct research in Africa. Even the biggest home-body I know is studying abroad in Ireland next semester. I've witnessed friends get engaged, buy a home, and graduate with an acceptance letter to the job they've always wanted. I've watched as new students join the university and quickly rise to leadership positions that influence the community.

UMSL fosters an environment that ensures the success of its students, and this is due largely in part to the level of concern the people sitting among you already have for you. If it weren't for their willingness to attend this breakfast, I would not be enrolled at the University of Missouri- St. Louis today. If they were not pushing me to better myself, I would not be speaking to you as President of the Student Government Association.

And so I challenge you to take advantage of your time with the deans and other academic leaders here today. Ask a lot of tough questions. Listen to their wisdom. They are here because your success is important. and they want to help you make

the right decisions about your education. I also challenge you to stay for UMSL Day. Find out why I love this university so much. Perhaps you may be the next student leader I will have the privilege to see succeed.

I hope you enjoy the remainder of the breakfast and your visit to the University of Missouri- St. Louis.