

Thank you, Donors!

This speech, presented by Junior Mikala Guidinger, was a highlight of the 2013 Torch & Shield Recognition program.

Hello everyone and thank you for being here. I am honored to have been given the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Mikala Guidinger, I am a junior here at UMC, and I am a business management major from Rochester, Minnesota. When I was first presented with this chance to speak tonight, I couldn't have been more thrilled to not only share my story with you, but the story about how I came to be who I am here at UMC.

When I began my adventure of applying to colleges, I focused on large schools with prominent veterinary programs. I always pictured myself as a large-school kind of person, after all, I was involved in high school as captain of my speech team, member of several orchestra groups, marching band, student government, and other clubs. The last thing on my mind was a school the same size as my high school in the middle of northwest Minnesota where ten below feels like a heat wave.

All joking aside, coming into my senior year of high school I was ready to head off to Colorado State University – I had been accepted, gone through the financial aid process, and was ready to go. However, one day, I found UMC online and something told me that I just had to visit. I applied on a Monday and was visiting the following Friday. My grandparents and I packed up the car and made the 6 hour trek to Crookston. The moment I stepped foot onto campus, I realized why I had been drawn by such curiosity and interest to UMC – this was it, I was 'home.'

There is no greater feeling than a



sense of belonging, and I can honestly say that almost anybody that comes to this campus will feel it. Where else will you find 43 states and 20 countries represented? Where the flags of all our students are proudly displayed? Where you can eat an authentic Korean dinner with your friend down the hall one night and be learning Norwegian the next? Right here, at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Where the campus thrives on diversity and individuality, but yet comes together as a cohesive community.

That was another thing that really stuck out to me, and still does to this day. The sense of community here amazes me each and every day. It is impossible to walk across campus without someone greeting you, seeing someone you know, or being

met with a passing friendly gesture. UMC is not just a community of students, but a community of students with an impressive 87 percent placement rate after graduation, graduating with a worldly recognized degree, from now the number ONE midwest public regional college in the U.S. News rankings.

Needless to say, UMC is by far my favorite place to be. My experience here has changed me as a person tremendously and shaped me into someone that I am proud to be. During my time here, I have developed my passion and skill for working with people and turned it into a Business Management degree. I have become involved with Student Ambassadors, am a member of the Women's Equestrian team, work in UTOC – our beautiful equine facility, the Eagle's Nest, and am a student manager at the Evergreen Grill.

I have truly made the most of my time here and my story is just one of many. Although we, as students, are all unique, we do have one thing in common. We wouldn't be where or who we are today if it weren't for each and every one of you and your contributions to this school, to scholarships, and to the student experience. On behalf of all the students at UMC whose lives you've touched, and from the bottom of my heart I sincerely say "thank you."

Thank you !!!

