Nora Maritza Bravo. A name that is unfamiliar to you, but means the absolute world to me. The sole reason that I am here today is because of this amazing woman.

Growing up with my mother, I felt like the luckiest kid in the world. Everyone loved her. When my friends came to visit, it didn’t matter if she knew them for five years or five days, she welcomed them with open arms and usually a plate of food. I still think that most of my friendships are as strong as they are because of her Puerto Rican rice. My mother taught me well and gave me sound advice as I was growing up. She told me, and showed me right from wrong, and I learned that I should always lend a helping hand, because I never know when I might need one.

I thought I would be able to handle it well as the time approached to leave my mother for what seemed like eternity. But it was actually a lot to deal with knowing that I would no longer eat her cooking every night, be nagged to do my chores, or wake up to her kissing me on my cheek, which she still does sometimes even though I am nineteen years old.

Last summer, I was at the point in my life where your students are now. I can clearly remember the week prior to my departure and how my mother acted towards me. She put me through a rollercoaster of emotions and I was riding right in the front seat. I remember frequent visits to our nearby Target, going through the aisles together and shopping for things I needed for my room. You know, the necessities: bed sheets, showering items, some late night snacks because I would no longer be able to just get up in the middle of the night and eat some of her food. I often caught her looking at me, smiling from ear to ear, and a couple of times, I caught her with a tear in her eye. Not because she was full of sorrow, but because she was full of joy and pride. I know mothers are supposed to brag about their children every now and then and exclaim how proud they are of their child’s accomplishments. My mother did that, and then some. Whether we were talking to cashiers at Target or stopping by her work to say hi to her boss, she figured out a way to talk about me 150% of the time. I know some people may think a parent like that just likes to boast, but that’s not the type of person she is at all. After everything that we went through as a family and everything she sacrificed to give me and my siblings a good life, she deserved to brag. The least I can do for her now is to strive for excellence, and that is what I am doing here at Marquette.
When freshman year first started, I didn’t take control of studying and learning the way I needed to. I felt like things were out of my reach and at times, everything was spiraling out of control. After my first college exam, things took a turn for the worse and I received the lowest score I had ever seen. I got a 40%. I couldn’t believe the score sheet and I had to do a double take just to be sure that it was my exam. I didn’t know what to do, other than to call my mother. Right away, she knew that something was wrong, and when I told her, she was just as surprised as I was. But being the wise and calming mother that she is, she talked some sense back into me and told me that everything was going to be alright. She told me that it was okay to make a mistake every now and then, but just be sure that those mistakes don’t become habits. The only way you can learn how to be successful is to get a taste of failure every now and then. The advice helped me out a lot, but just hearing her voice was also comforting.

Over the school year, my relationship with my mother was tested from time to time, but looking back, it actually became stronger and matured into a more adult relationship. I find that now I can talk to my mom about things that I wouldn’t feel comfortable talking about before, for example my future career and what I may want to pursue. And since I can’t see her everyday like I used to, I have learned to cherish the moments that we do have together. I also learned that I find comfort in the sound of her voice when I need a reminder of who I am and where I have come from.

For the parents, I would just like to say that while you may be sad or nervous about the departure of your child within a few months, I want you all to take a step back and look at the position your child is in. Your child has been admitted into Marquette University, one of the most prestigious universities in the United States. You have taken your child this far, now let them take hold of their future here at Marquette and make the most of it. If my story is of any indication, know that your good parenting will surely not go to waste. Let them build off of what you taught them and create the pathway to their future. But just know that there will be times when they will need you more than ever, and when those moments come, do not fear. Continue to do what you have been doing and give your child sound advice and comfort them when need be. Send them a home cooked meal every now and then. Just let your child know that you are there for them no matter what. Speaking on the behalf of every college student, that is the most reassuring feeling to experience, to know that you have the support of your parents.

Thank you for listening to my story today, and I wish all you incoming students and your families the best of luck.