



Dear <Salutation>,

When I was in high school, I pictured myself at a big D1 institution competing in track. My mother, however, had other ideas and chose Oberlin for me. I hate to say it, but she was definitely right! Oberlin was the first place where I felt like I was more than an athlete, where I finally felt visible in the classroom. I've been challenged academically, mentally, emotionally, and athletically in the best ways possible. I've been able to achieve my academic goals while pushing ahead to whatever came next—but more importantly, I have been happy.

This year, my senior year, has been eventful—and unusual. I spent the fall applying for fellowships and making plans for life after graduation. Spring semester started off with exciting news, too—I had qualified for nationals and would be heading to North Carolina to participate in shot put. I had not been able to qualify for nationals since my first year at Oberlin, and I was looking forward to the opportunity to earn an All-American title! But the day after we got to North Carolina, nationals were canceled. The concerns over COVID-19 had shut everything down, so we turned around and drove back to campus.

Back in Oberlin, we learned that the rest of the semester would be completed remotely. I'd originally planned to stay on campus and finish my senior year from my dorm room, but after a week I decided it made more sense to go home to Rhode Island and shelter in place with my partner. The Office of Student Life helped me find the funding to travel and rent a car. I also kept my loaner laptop from the college so that I could participate in remote learning assignments and other classwork. I received texts and phone calls from my friends and coaches, too—it was helpful to have people checking in on me when we were all so far away from Oberlin.

Working remotely was challenging, but I wanted to stay involved with the committee planning our virtual graduation “celebration.” Since we couldn't be together physically, I really wanted to help ensure that the seniors would be recognized and celebrated in some of the ways that we would be if we were on campus.

Even though my senior year turned out to be very different than I thought it would be, I want to let you know how grateful I am for Oberlin—and for Oberlin's amazing alumni community. The best thing about Oberlin is the people. I know that many of you have donated your time, your resources, and your money to help me and other students succeed. Without YOUR support, I would not have been able to attend Oberlin. I appreciate everything you do for Oberlin; I have seen it impacting the lives of so many students on campus.

Now, more than ever, your support for Oberlin and its students is needed. Please consider making a gift to the Annual Fund again this year. It means so much to us, and I thank you sincerely.

Naeisha McClain

Naeisha McClain '20
Sociology, with honors

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