

Do I look different to you? In some ways, I am. Just probably not in the ways you might think.

My name is Fadwa Abulughod.

Finishing another year of college is not a normal milestone for me. For me, each year marks a triumph over a challenging journey.

I am also different because my family moved to the United States from Kuwait during the Gulf War.

That is largely where my differences end.

Like most MIAD students, I stand here tonight solely because of your generosity.

My parents worked hard and they fully supported my passion for art. But they could not nurture my talents financially, and my north side high school had a weak art program.

Like many MIAD students, I took my first steps on my professional journey in MIAD's Pre-College program. I received a full scholarship aimed at developing students who would be the first in their family to attend college.

Pre-College showed me how great my potential as a communication designer was.

But an undergraduate education at a prestigious art and design college like MIAD was not an option financially. I resigned myself to putting my dreams on hold to help take care of my family.

MIAD's Admissions Department never gave up on me. Thanks to their persistence, I was accepted with a scholarship that made my dream a reality.

Before I thank you, I'd like to return to differences for a moment. In high school, my appearance and religious practices were often cause for comment and misunderstanding.

From the very beginning, MIAD embraced and respected my faith both academically and socially. This has not been the experience of many of my friends at other area colleges.

I am excited for my future and hope to work at an ad agency when I graduate next year. I am already using my design work to break down stereotypes. I also enjoy doing freelance work in my community, helping to show that a designer has a rightful professional place alongside doctors, lawyers and engineers. And next year I will have an internship at Rockwell Automation.

To this day, I will never forget the moment I learned that your generosity would make my dreams possible. I keep that letter near to me, to remind me that there are people who believe in my future.

Please know that you are not just giving a dollar amount to an institution. You are offering an entire future to the many MIAD students like me.

On their behalf, I thank you.