

September 2023 – DJ Mara

September 25, 2023

By DJ Mara



Pictured Above: DJ Mara

Full Name: DJ Mara

High School: Saint Paul Diocesan Junior/Senior High School

Graduation Year: 2022

Job Title: Political Communication Student at Emerson College

Other Affiliations: Student Journalist, Political Staffer

Briefly describe what you do for work/college. I graduated from Saint Paul in 2022 and took a gap year. During that gap year, I advanced myself both personally and professionally. I am now a first-year student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Political Communication at Emerson College in Boston.

What advice do you have for current Saint Paul students to make the most of their experience at Saint Paul? My greatest advice for current students is to get involved while you are in high school. You will get out of your high school experience what you put into it. I gained some of the most beneficial experiences and have friends to this day from some of the clubs I got involved with at Saint Paul.

Who influenced you the most during your time at Saint Paul? Why? I learned so much from faculty, staff, and students alike, but I would have to say that Mr. St. John influenced me most during my time at Saint Paul. I got to work with Mr. St. John as a student in his Concepts in Leadership class, as well as a student leader on campus. In every one of our cross-sections at Saint Paul, Mr. St. John imparted upon me the ability to meet people where they are, to capitalize on my strengths, and taught me how to be a better leader and person.

What are your favorite memories at Saint Paul? There are so many memories I could recount during my time at Saint Paul. From club meetings to Open Houses, to Pep Rallies, to Homecoming and Prom, I truly had an amazing experience at Saint Paul. One particular event that was full-circle for me was A Knight's Reception, held in March 2022. Legacy alumni were invited to Saint Paul to reconnect with friends old and new, and to see all of the amazing things Saint Paul had to offer. At this event, I was asked to give a speech about what Saint Paul means to me. I spoke about my involvement on campus, as well as how my education has prepared me to go out into the real world. Giving that speech was a full circle moment for me, and it told the high school freshman in me, "Don't worry- you have a home here."

What do you value most from your time at Saint Paul? I value the many connections and friendships I made during my time at Saint Paul.

What is the most important thing you learned at Saint Paul? The most important thing that I learned at Saint Paul is that "it is not a building or an address that defines a school, but it is the people that help foster a school's identity." I was mentored by teachers and staff who made an effort to get to know every student, and who were always willing to lend a helping hand. I had the privilege to know peers and classmates who fostered lasting relationships both inside and outside the classroom. And all of this occurred while each of us grew in faith, morality, and learning how to be a functioning member of society.

Describe Saint Paul in three words. Diverse. Vibrant. Growing.

How did your education at Saint Paul prepare you for what you are doing in college and are doing today? I am currently a first-year student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Political Communication at Emerson College in Boston. My education at Saint Paul has prepared me to meet people where they are, learn about their backgrounds and perspectives, and bring people together to create positive, lasting, and meaningful change.

What activities or sports were you involved in at Saint Paul? I had the honor of serving as Editor in Chief of the Saint Paul Gazette, as well as a Class Officer. I was also the Yearbook Editor, President of the Racial Equity Coalition, Orientation Leader, and a Student Ambassador. After graduating and during my gap year, I had the privilege of working as the Advancement Intern in the Saint Paul Advancement Office alongside Sherry Callahan, where I helped launch the Saint Paul Spirit Store, and assisted in facilitating Saint Paul's first Giving Tuesday fundraiser.

What advice would you give current high school students pursuing a similar career path to your own? Whether you want to be a politician or a news anchor, or if those career paths scare you, I will leave you with the following advice: *Political debates are here to stay, and in this world of hyper-partisan politics, we need to learn how to be more effective communicators. Stay true to your beliefs and stand up for them every day, but also be aware of when it is your turn to speak, and when it is your turn to listen.*

What advice would you give your 15-year-old younger self? I would tell my 15-year-old self "Don't sweat the small stuff. In the end, all that will matter is that you end high school in a better place than when you began."

What is something people may not know about you? Something people may not know about me is that I am working on three local political campaigns in Worcester while at college.