Dear Incoming McDonough Scholars (Cohort 28),

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, was once quoted as saying, “Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.” I believe this quote does a wonderful job at explaining what you are about to experience through the 2014 McDonough EXCEL Workshop.

You are all entering this time of your lives on an equal playing field – you’re moving away from the familiar, and into the unknown. While you’ve all been accepted into one of the best undergraduate leadership programs in the United States, there are many new things for you to learn, not only about leadership, but also about yourself. Coming into EXCEL, it shouldn’t matter what leadership experience you had or didn’t have in high school; here, you have a fresh start. Take this as an opportunity to forget the leadership experiences you know, and define your success this week as how much you grow.

The entire EXCEL Leader team has gone through the Workshop at least once before, with some of us enjoying our fourth consecutive year of EXCEL. They see this workshop as a leadership development opportunity for them, as well. For you, the incoming Scholar, this may take some getting used to, especially if you put yourself in a lot of leader positions in high school. You may think to yourself, “I’m already a leader. I know that I’m a leader; that’s why I applied for this program.” But I challenge you to come into the Workshop without this mentality – grow yourself.

Last semester, the McDonough Student Advisory Council, or McSAC, created the new McDonough Scholar Values. They are Engagement, Enlightenment, Resilience, and Direction, with each value representing each year spent at Marietta College. The first-year value, therefore, engagement, charges you, the incoming scholar, to build a community and find your place in it. As you journey to Marietta, Ohio, at the end of the summer, I encourage you to accept this new town as your home and your community. Find your place through the College, through volunteering, through the friendships and connections you will make, as well as through self-actualization. What will you do to make a difference in our small town? And better yet, how will you let our small town make a difference in you? To do this, I challenge you once again: grow yourself.

College is an exciting time. You will face many great obstacles to overcome, but it will only make you a better person and a better leader. The EXCEL Workshop begins this journey of overcoming obstacles, and I hope you walk away from the week with feelings of excitement, engagement, and EXCELeration. Never be afraid to take one step farther than you thought possible; only then will you be ready to help others take the same steps to growth, and truly become a leader.

Keep moving forward,

Jenna Skoglund
2014 EXCEL Workshop Coordinator
Marietta College ’15 (Cohort 25)