

The following are excerpts from student speaker Sara Arno '10 at Westover's Opening Convocation:

***Call Out:** because our teachers take the care to train us in rigor, we will be more prepared for life. Their giving us the tough and time consuming work that they do will ultimately help us get through all of our future challenges.*

Let me tell you about my insanely rough start as a freshman at Westover. First I managed to catch mono. My tiredness and misery along with many other symptoms first appeared on the second day of sports camp, resulting in a crazy high fever by the first day of classes. It was probably one of the worst possible ways to start a high school education that seemed so impossible for even a healthy person. On that first morning, I forced my sore self out of bed and went into the bathroom on the freshman corridor to shower and mentally prepare myself. Right before I got into the shower, I took my temperature, which I clearly remember was 104.1, and made the somewhat stupid decision to not tell anyone. I made it through maybe one class and then called it quits. My intentions were pure, but physically I couldn't make it. I know that I must have thought that if I couldn't make it through the first day of classes, then how would I ever be able to make it through the four years of exhaustive academics here? I felt stuck in a strange place with absolutely no idea what to do while the world seemed to be ending.

This (sad, sad tale) makes me think of the show "Lost" where the passengers of Oceanic flight 815 also get off to a rough start, maybe even worse than mine... Maybe... "Lost" has lessons to teach about Westover. For instance, in one of the earliest episodes of the first season, Charlie, a main character, is going through a really tough time. One of the other characters, John Locke, gives Charlie a life lesson.

While in the jungle during their first few days on the island, Locke points out a cocoon that is in the canopy of the jungle and then pulls out a knife. He then tells Charlie that he could easily stick the point of his knife into the slit at the top of the cocoon, widening the opening ever so slightly and helping the struggling moth break free, and by doing so, deprive the moth of nature's strengthening process. Or he could let the moth endure the struggle that nature intended for it. If Locke had helped the moth out of the cocoon, then the moth might lack the strength necessary for its life in the wild. Likewise, although the academics here can be tough at times – and maybe "tough" is an understatement – still, because our teachers take the care to train us in rigor, we will be more prepared for life. Their giving us the tough and time consuming work that they do will ultimately help us get through all of our future challenges. Coming out the cocoon is not easy for the moth, but the moth can be thankful in a "moth-sort-of-way" that Locke did not widen the opening. So now, facing another year of academic challenges, let's keep in mind that in the end, the struggle is worth it.