

Although it feels strange to come together and reminisce after only five short years away from school, let's step back and think about how much has changed over that time as well as things that can't ever be shaken. Although the spirit of the school has remained the same, the details are changing at a dizzying pace. Even the places that the students work and eat and sleep are not as we remember them.

When we showed up for PIT or orientation, the campus wasn't outfitted for wireless, and few of us considered our laptops and cellphones the lifeline that they've become. Food at the d hall was edible but still pretty clearly institutional, and the basement of Marshall Buch had that smell.

In spite of that, we had an edge, too, over earlier years. For us, the Athletic Sports and Fitness Center had always been there, as had beautiful Barshinger Hall, and we got nearly two years to enjoy Roschel, too, when it was finished in our junior year. Wireless service improved so rapidly over the four years that it seems a little hard to believe that it wasn't always there when we first started.

We said goodbye to President Kneidler when he retired, and welcomed President Fry when he joined us from UPenn, and eagerly read his White Paper for his plans for our campus. And did he ever have plans!

Even when things changed around us, we kept up with some old traditions too we went on latenight Turkey Hill runs, we carried around discreet bottles and opaque cups on Spring Arts weekend, and once we were old enough to get in, squandered many an hour at Hildy's and Brendee's. We spent long hours in Shad Fack or Martin Science Library during Reading Days, and then went to the d hall to get served pancakes in our pajamas by our professors.

And yet our time was not without heartache, either. On a beautiful, sunny Tuesday near the beginning of our sophomore year, we gathered in the Atrium and in our dorms and classrooms to huddle together and watch buildings fall on endless loop. The phones were out on campus that morning. We pulled together then, though, as we did for our more minor grievances.

I hope that F&M students will always feel that sense of unity and cooperation, whether they're recovering together from a disaster or complaining about a tenure decision, whether they're pitching in to help local kids buy school supplies or enjoying a lively disagreement in class. Having shared those four years together here, I'm confident that if anyplace can foster that, it is this place.