

# CAITLIN STIEBER

I can do anything in 18 days. This is a marketing slogan that is used to convince prospective students to come to Cornell, and when I first heard it, it developed into a sort of joke for me. When I was running in the sports center and fell, spraining my ankle, I loudly proclaimed “I can do anything in 18 days.” When I fell down a mountain in Costa Rica, almost taking out several people in front of me, I could be again heard screaming “I can do anything in 18 days”. But as time went on, I began using the slogan for more serious things. When I got an A in a tough class, when I got accepted into graduate school, or even when I just survived a very hard day, I would use the slogan to remind myself that I am capable of great things.

We all have similar stories of what we can do in 18 days, and all these stories help to illustrate what has made our time at Cornell so great. I will be sharing examples of what we have all done in 18 days that has shaped our experience at Cornell and the people we have become.

I can swim with sharks.

I can eat gelato every day for two weeks.

I can swim with dolphins.

I can hike up a mountain and count monkeys.

I can travel through time in 18 days.

I can have class overlooking the streets of Florence.

I can survive the attack of a wild pig.

Cornell has given many of us opportunities to study off campus and broaden our horizons. These are experiences that we would not have been able to gain anywhere else. Learning about other cultures and getting to understand the environment has helped to shape our understanding of the world and how we can best help to change it as we move forward.

I can complete original research.

I can start, finish, and publish an article in an academic journal.

I can read an entire textbook

I can learn a language.

I can build a trebuchet.

I can get an A in a class I couldn't even pass in high school.

I can write and get a grant funded.

I can learn to dance.

I can be accepted into graduate school on full scholarship.

Many of us have had academic experiences and successes that we could not even have dreamed of in high school. We have learned subjects that have led us to our passions and what we plan to pursue in the future. Through our hard work and dedication, we have been able to accomplish things that most undergraduates can only dream about. We did not accomplish this through our work alone. We have the support of countless faculty and staff that wanted to help us succeed in whatever they could. Many professors would stay after class for questions, always have their office door open for students to walk in, and many would even come in during the evening hours to help students with questions. Many staff members have helped us with the running of clubs, paperwork or lending a listening ear and helping hand. We cannot ever thank the faculty and staff enough. You all have shaped our experience at Cornell and helped it to be positive. You have provided research opportunities, support, friendly faces, and have helped us to believe in ourselves, like you all believe in us.

I can learn my best friend has cancer.

I can lose a best friend.

I can be denied from graduate school.

I can be diagnosed with PTSD, hospitalized, rehabilitated and return to Cornell for my senior seminar.

I can graduate college and still not know what I am doing with my life.

While we have experienced great things at Cornell, we all have experienced hardships as well. As will be in our real lives, there is bad mixed in with the good. We must remember the friends and family that began this journey with us, but are not here to see its completion. We have all gone through these things and come out the other side through the support of our friends that have become our family. I guess it makes sense that people you see everyday for four years become more than just friends, I just never knew how much I would rely on all my friends to support me and hold me up during the tough times. As we move on, this support will not go away. We need to remember to lean on each other for support when we need it. If you don't get that job, if someone close to you passes away, if you move across the country or out of the country, if you get into your top job or school. We have supported each other this far, and we must continue. In addition to the support systems we have made here, many of us are lucky to have great support systems wherever we call home. Parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, we thank you for your support for the past four years. We appreciate every late night phone call to calm us down before an exam, every care package, and every visit when we were missing home just a little too much. Thank you especially to the moms for sharing their day with us today.

I can fall in love.

I can make a best friend... and then forget about them over block break.

I can major in myself, on accident, for two years.

I can binge watch all of the office.

I can organize a TED talk.

I can get stuck in an elevator when the power goes out.

I can graduate.

There are too many amazing things that we have been able to see and accomplish to include in this speech. So for now, I will end with some final words of advice. As we go out into the world, we can't forget those who have helped us along our journey and those we may be leaving behind. We can accomplish A LOT in 18 days, and we need to keep the drive and perseverance that has gotten us here as we move forward. While you will probably all forget this speech in 18 days, I hope you do not forget your experience at Cornell and the people you have met here.

Congratulations to the class of 2018.