

GILL
ST. BERNARD'S

Dylan Polachi



The best advice Dylan Polachi received about succeeding in college came from his Upper School English teacher, Dr. Andrew Lutz, who imparted three simple words: Take a risk.

"When Dr. Lutz talked with our class, he realized that most of us wanted to go into business and finance, but he stressed going to college with an open mind to be willing to try new things and explore what interests you," says Polachi.

The suggestion has served him well at Harvard, and as a result of following it, he has expanded his field of study. Last year, the economics major decided to pursue his interest in architecture and enrolled in a course called *The Eternal City of Rome*.

"I didn't know what to expect," Polachi says. "I'd always had an interest in architecture but never explored it, so I went for it." This year, as a sophomore, Polachi added two new classes from the genre, one about landmarks of world architecture and another on Venetian architecture. Now he's minoring in art history and architecture.

For his Harvard thesis, Polachi plans to examine the economic impacts of gentrification, an area of study that he was first introduced to at Gill during his unit in Guatemala, where he assisted From Houses to Homes. "I'd never been in a developing country before, and the unit sparked an interest in people and places," he says. That experience led him to take an independent study in human geography with former Gill teacher John Ripton. "This course was my most rewarding academic experience," he says. "The independent study exposed me to the idea of gentrification and how it affects economies all over the world."

Recently, Polachi stepped out of his comfort zone even further and landed on the set of an *SNL Digital Short*. Through a fellow volunteer at *The Harvard Crimson*, he learned about an upcoming *Saturday Night Live* audition and submitted an on-line application. The short was filmed overnight on a Brooklyn set, where Polachi played an extra in an *Undercover Boss* meets *Star Wars* parody starring actor Adam Driver. "It was the most insane 10-hour period of my life," says Polachi. In addition to *SNL*, Polachi also has a few commercials lined up and an appearance in the SyFy series, *The Internet Ruined My Life*.

Ironically, it was a risk that led Polachi to Dr. Lutz's AP English literature class at Gill in the first place. "I'd never been the strongest writer, I was more math, history, and science oriented," he says. "I remember being uncomfortable with writing all through the Middle School. Then, in the fall of my senior year, my parents and my guidance counselor encouraged me to enroll in Dr. Lutz's class. I learned so much and really improved my writing. It was my favorite course and my biggest academic risk. I didn't think I could do it, and I ended up with an A."

Polachi started Gill at age three, following his older siblings Alexa '08 and Ryan '11. When he matriculated to Harvard, he found that he was better prepared than most of his fellow students in a number of ways. "When I got to college, a lot of my

peers weren't able to talk comfortably to their teachers," he says. "The ability to talk to teachers effectively and with a confident demeanor is so important. It's not part of the curriculum at Gill, but you learn through interactions with your teachers in such small classes. I came to Harvard knowing how to converse with adults, and it was a huge advantage."

For Gill seniors heading to college in the fall, Polachi has some advice of his own to offer. "Your first semester of college will not go as planned. I promise you. Things have changed – you're in a new situation with new people. You have to take it all with a grain of salt. Remember that you are here for a reason and you belong here. The first semester is an adjustment, but you'll end up just where you're supposed to."