



A picture of the flag of
Puerto Rico.

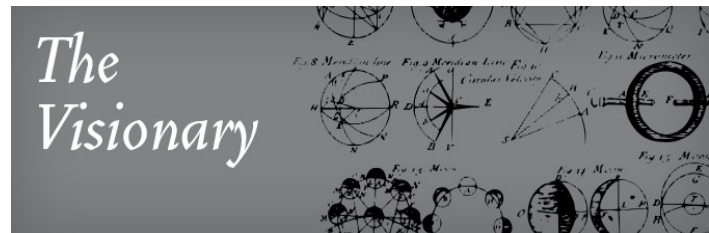
Messina: A Long-Remembered Experience

By Yamil Hernandez

Coming to a new home becomes an unforgettable experience, yet it does not mean it is the easiest, especially if you leave many things behind. I am a Puerto Rican student in Loyola, and I know how hard move-in is for many students, especially if you are a first-year student. When move-in day finally arrived, I asked myself many questions: how is my roommate going to be? Are we going to agree on everything? Is it loud in the hallways? Are people going to be nice when I move in? I could not avoid overthinking about the difficulty of coming to a state I had never been to before, and Maryland was now the place I would call home for the next four years. This feeling began to grow scary, especially for the seventeen-year-old me. To my surprise, everyone made me feel at home. At first, it felt weird to, but then I embraced how my roommate became like my brother; how my “floor-mates” became my neighbors; and how strangers became friends.

Loyola Support

One of the things I am most grateful to Loyola for is that its community impressed me by being supportive. I thought that college would be a bittersweet experience because I knew I would be having a good time with friends and learning from classes I liked, but I believed experiences with professors were going to be cold and negative. However, Loyola faculty and professors proved me wrong by demonstrating to me that they are also relatable, still maintaining a professional relation.



Gray image with one of the Messina themes: **The Visionary.**

Messina 101

A program in Loyola made my transition to college smoother—[Messina](#). Messina is a program for all first-years in which they are placed in groups of less than twenty students, and they take a course pairing throughout the year. The group will stay the same: so, you will have a group to meet, to connect with, and to become friends with. Messina also introduces you to Baltimore, the place you either already call home or that will become your home while you are in Loyola. They do activities off campus to engage students with close neighborhoods and the city surrounding campus. Messina also connects the group with the two professors, an Evergreen and a Messina advisor, people who are there to support you in everything they can. Evergreens are upper-class students who volunteer to accompany the Messina group and to be another source of support as another student.



My Messina group

Story from an Evergreen



Statue of Ignatius of Loyola in the Quad

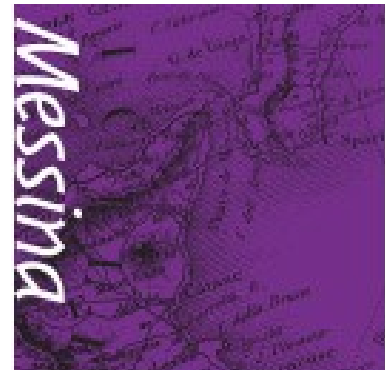
Everything starts in Fall Welcome Weekend, a Loyola tradition that consists of officially introducing first-years to Loyola by connecting them to their Messina and having activities during the weekend. Not only do the first days create meaningful moments, but they also become memories for a lifetime. Abby Kiewe ('24) told her experience: "During my fall welcome weekend, my Evergreen Grace had our whole group talking about Cheez-Its vs. Goldfish. I was so amazed how many people could bond over such a simple topic and some of my closest friends last year were from my Messina group, and I think I was so comfortable talking to my group, even over zoom because of the environment my Evergreens created. Because I felt so welcome to the Loyola community, I think I have become much more talkative in large groups along with feeling much more comfortable asking for help." Evergreens are also a source of support of campus. For me, Abby has made my transition to college so much smoother. She encourages me to be productive by focusing on my studies while keeping time for myself and have a social life.

"I love Abby, our Evergreen. She's awesome: she's really helpful. And she's definitely helped me get involved in the community and giving me tips."

-Reilly Hylton '25

Your Supportive New Family

Evergreens also become a crucial part of the transition process for freshmen, and they also stay as friends and people very close to our hearts. Evergreens also help students through their doubts and most difficult moments. Messina members know the resources at the university, and they will do anything they can to make you feel at home, and they will encourage you to become the best version of yourself. Reilly, my Messina friend, also said, "So first, at the beginning of the semester, I was super anxious, I was so nervous, I didn't know if I was going to like college. I think everyone is just so nice here and supportive, so a ton of people like Abby or upper-class men helped me think about the resources on campus. I made friends through Messina, classes, and clubs." The experiences of Evergreens and freshmen show that, although Messina was designed for first-years, it has proved to also impact everyone involved with it.



A logo in purple with the name: Messina

The Beginning of Your Loyola Experience...



An image of the sky from Loyola's bridge.

The program not only connects students, professors, and Evergreens, but has also left a legacy to remember. Many friendships, bonds, and relations are forged in Messina every year. Messina inspires students in many different ways. For example, Reilly ('25) mentioned, "I love my Messina group, it's the best, and also Abby's such a great Evergreen and she's encouraged me to apply to be an Evergreen, so I definitely want to get involved in the Evergreen program at some time in my Loyola experience." Messina helped students like Reilly to find direction in their future, and that is the magic behind Messina: the program can have an outstanding impact in your life if you let it flourish inside of you. Messina familiarizes professors, staff members, upper-class students, freshmen, and the entire Loyola community. The program also serves as a bridge to connect students with service opportunities and to become aware of people with disabilities, the communities surrounding Loyola, and Baltimore. Messina inspires students to develop in different areas: to connect and engage themselves with others; to tell the stories of their hearts; to enjoy the good life; and to become visionaries. In creating such a supportive environment, Messina helps you become a better version of yourself.