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Ale Pineda

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High school was ending, and I had to make a decision to go to college somewhere. It was hard to decide because I was so comfortable where I was. I had a solid group of friends, I was in a relationship, I was doing really well. I was refusing change. A month or two before graduation, all the doors to come to Andrews opened up, so I decided to just go with it and see where life took me.

I remember getting into the car at the South Bend airport and driving to Andrews University. It was one of the longest car rides of my life. I wasn't sure what I was doing—I didn't understand my purpose. I remember being so incredibly scared and asking God why I had to be here.

Orientation week was one of the hardest weeks of my life. I moved to a different country, I didn't know anyone, I was unsure of my major, and I was going to be in an education system I knew nothing about. I remember craving a typical Hispanic dish: rice and beans. The Thursday of orientation week, I remember waking up and praying that God would give me a sign to show me there was a reason I had to stay here because I was so ready to pack my bags and go home.

I walked into the department orientation breakfast and found the education table (I was an education major at first) and met a few different people who told me about this little place called the Gazebo. They told me all about the “cheap” prices and the really good quesadillas. I asked my mom if we could go and try it out. And as I walked into the Gazebo, I saw the TV screen advertising rice and beans for \$2.27. This was the sign I needed. This was God talking to me and showing me how he would provide for me.

Three years later, I can definitely see my purpose. I can tell how much I've grown. I can tell how much the environment around me has influenced my personality and who I am on a day-to-day basis. I am forever grateful for everything that has happened at Andrews and all the opportunities I've been provided.



Ale Pineda