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### Student Profiles: Lindsey Navarro, Loyola New Orleans

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## Student Profile

## "I had never heard of fighting peacocks. But they told me to show up."

By Ramon Vargas

**L**indsey Navarro's junior year at Loyola University New Orleans was supposed to be a reprise of her previous years: taking classes for her criminal justice major, co-captaining the Loyola dance team, and playing soccer. She had a job lined up with an assistant D.A. in New Orleans.

It was to be her first year alone, away from parental supervision and the residential supervision of Loyola.

"I was finally going to get an apartment, move in with my best friend, everything you could want. We searched for a month and a half and finally found one on Claiborne and Nashville.

"We packed it with my mom's old furniture, and it was just great. It looked like a Bohemian getaway—perfect. I moved *everything* in on that Friday. We went out that night, and it was just the perfect beginning to a new year," Lindsey recounts, her eyes starry with enthusiasm.

That Friday was the Friday before Hurricane Katrina decimated the Crescent City.

Lindsey, like many Louisiana natives, had lived through the bothersome hassle of packing for the storms and returning from false alarm after false alarm. She ignored the hurricane's tracking and the city officials' pleas to be ready to evacuate.

Her mom, however, called Saturday morning, urging her to turn the radio on. She did, and the category five warnings and predictions of doom and destruction finally scared her into her wits.

"I was finally convinced Saturday morning and left to Houston. I grabbed a pair of pants, five shirts, and flip-flops I had on. I just *left*, thinking it would be the same as I left it."

Clutching a pillow at the foot of a bed in a Houston hotel at 2 a.m., Lindsey watched Katrina swirl through southeastern Louisiana on TV.

"Everything was supposed to be fine."

Then she watched in horror as the pumps failed, the waters rose, and the



photo: Juan Cardenas

## Lindsey Navarro

### Loyola New Orleans

levees crumbled. The future she envisioned was washed away along with the lives of a tragically significant amount of the city's populace.

"My mom sent me pictures of my apartment, and I cried. 'I just had everything mapped out.' The place was mildewed, furniture was in rooms it wasn't supposed to be, age-old antiques' history erased by the floodwaters. Her Bohemian palace was unlivable.

"I started looking for schools; I had an aunt and uncle in New Jersey, and I saw that Fordham was a Jesuit school taking Loyola students." Looking to make

the best of a bad situation, she set her sights on the Big Apple itself.

"You can't go to the Bronx. You're gonna die," she remembers (with a chuckle brimming with optimism) her father telling her. Thus, Fordham was out.

Saint Peter's College, then, was the next choice closest to her housing situation in Maplewood, New Jersey. "I had never heard of the Fighting Peacocks," Lindsey laughs. "But they told me to show up."

Assuming a more serious tone, she recalls her mother bringing her the most important valuables from her apartment (her favorite pair of blue jeans, her pictures). "I packed my bags, put it all in God's hands and let it go. It hit me when the D.A. called me for an interview and I had to tell her I wasn't available for the semester. Things weren't going to be the same in Jersey City."

But with the unsure days of Houston behind her, things started to look considerably brighter at Saint Peter's.

"The criminal justice program here is just amazing. Very hands-on classes like homicide investigation—infamous crimes and criminals. I'm just going to bring what I learn back with me and freak my teachers at Loyola out."

It was at Saint Peter's that Lindsey realized her Big Apple's dreams were an eyeshot way.

"I love Loyola. There's nothing I would change about it. But *it's* here. Manhattan is next door. The job market is crazy. You know how you just know you have a future and you're supposed to be somewhere? This is my chance to be someone new, to reset everything I had mapped out and relocate it to New York. This is where I'm supposed to be right now." ■

*Ramon Vargas, a would-be freshman at Loyola New Orleans, is spending his first semester at Saint Peter's College.*