

UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION WELCOME

Karen M. Whitney

Sunday, August 25, 2013

Marwick-Boyd Auditorium, 7:00 p.m.

Welcome, Class of 2017, to Clarion University's annual University Convocation and to your first official university event as new college freshmen!

Give yourselves a hand.

We come together this evening to celebrate not only the beginning of a new academic year but also your entry into our university community. As you may know, the word "convocation" means an assembly of fellow students, faculty, and staff welcoming you to an order of scholars. This event also concludes a series of activities that each of you has undergone – from preparing for years to enter college, to applying to Clarion, to orientation, to registration, to a very busy Discovery Weekend.

I do want to ask you to help me thank the many faculty and staff who have been here for you over the summer by meeting with you at orientation, advising you on your courses, helping you move into housing this Friday, and for the many meetings, talks and emails along the way. I thank them for their commitment to you and ask you to help me thank them now.

(Applause)

This convocation also represents a beginning – a beginning of new friendships, new learning, new dreams, new opportunities for exploration and self discovery. In joining our academic community, you have joined your fellow students, as well as the faculty, staff, and alumni of Clarion University who hold very specific values that I now ask you to live by every day as a member of our community. Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni value:

- learning;
- accomplishment;
- encouragement;
- diversity;
- civility; and
- civic engagement.

In talking about our core values, I am reminding you that with the opportunities of being a college student at Clarion come many responsibilities. First and foremost, your life is in your hands. Your love and pursuit of learning is up to you. You will have to take the initiative to seek out and construct your college life. It's all around you but you will have to step up and seize the opportunities to work with your fellow students and faculty.

I want to be very blunt with you. I want each and every one of you to graduate from Clarion University. I expect – and so should you – that your graduation will be your greatest accomplishment. Everything else are the steps along the way. In 2017, at your graduation from Clarion University, I want to personally shake your hand as you cross that stage.

So, this night, which is on the eve of your first day of your first week of your first semester, of your first year as a Clarion University college student, there are three things I encourage you to do in order to be successful. Here goes:

- Go to class every day. Don't miss a day. Going to class is Job One.
- Be ready for every day. Reading assignments, tests, papers, projects – no excuses.
- Dare to care. Make friends and be a friend. You will need them and they will need you.

Your time at Clarion is an opportunity for you to discover for yourself through getting to know others whose backgrounds and experiences may be very different from your own. At Clarion we value each other. Each of us possesses common experiences and backgrounds from which we build upon our learning as well as differences from which we also learn and grow. It is truly the combination of human and intellectual diversity that enables a rich and relevant college experience. Seize the chance to learn and to grow from each other.

Another Clarion value I want to discuss with you is that of civility. Civility can have many forms. As incoming students I want to impress upon you the importance of civility as a way to fundamentally relate to each other, to the faculty, staff and the community. Civility is first and foremost your commitment to the Clarion University Student Code of Conduct, which outlines how we expect you to relate to each other – to act in ways that respect persons, property and principles that comprise the university and the community. I ask that you always act in ways that will make us proud.

In closing, I would like to recognize many folks who are with us this evening and the many folks who have worked hard to make this event so special. My sincere thanks to the University Convocation Planning Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Todd Pfannestiel and Ms. Erin Schuetz; Mr. David Katis, our master of ceremonies; Mr. Rob Hoover, who manages this wonderful auditorium; and Dr. Henry Alviani of our Department of Music, who worked with our students to provide our own wonderful performance this evening. In particular I would like to thank Dr. Martha Robinson, who led our procession with a wonderful bagpipe rendition. I also thank all the faculty and staff who have joined in this celebration.

Finally, to you our newest students who have now joined the Clarion University Golden Eagle Family, your success is our number one goal. Now is the time to take flight, soar high to live your life's dreams, work hard, have fun and . . . Fly, Eagles, Fly! Repeat with me . . .Fly, Eagles, Fly!

Congratulations, Class of 2017, and have an eagletastic year