Good afternoon! As president of the university, I am proud to welcome you to this university. Your achievement is the triumph of years of hard work, both of your own and of your parents and teachers. Here at the university, we pledge to make your educational experience as rewarding as possible.

In welcoming you to the university, I am reminded of my own high school graduation and the photograph my mom took of my dad and me. "Pose naturally," Mom instructed us. "Wait!" said Dad, "Let's take a picture of me handing him an alarm clock." The clock woke me up every morning in college. It is still on my office desk.

Let me share with you something that you may not expect. You will miss your old routines and your parents' reminders to work hard and attain your best. You may have cried tears of joy to be finally finished with high school, and your parents may have cried tears of joy to be finally finished with doing your laundry! But know this: The future is built on a strong foundation of the past.

For you, these next four years will be a time unlike any other. Here you are surrounded by great resources: interesting students from all over the country, a learned and caring faculty, a comprehensive library, great sports facilities, and student organizations covering every possible interest – from the arts to science, to community service and so on. You will have the freedom to explore and learn about new subjects.

You will learn to get by on very little sleep, meet fascinating people, and pursue new passions. I want to encourage you to make the most of this unique experience, and to use your energy and enthusiasm to reap the benefits of this opportunity.

You may feel overwhelmed by the wealth of courses available to you.

You will not be able to experience them all, but sample them widely! College offers many things to do and to learn, and each of them offers a different way to see the world. If I could give you only one piece of advice about selecting courses, it would be this: Challenge yourself! Don’t assume that you know in advance what fields will interest you the most. Take some courses in fields you've never tried before. You will not only emerge as a more broadly educated person, but you will also stand a better chance of discovering an unsuspected passion that will help to shape your future.

A wonderful example of this is the fashion designer, Vera Wang, who originally studied art history. Over time, Wang paired her studies in art history with her love of fashion and turned it into a passion for design, which made her a famous designer around the world.

Here at the university, it may not always be pleasant to have so many new experiences all at once. In your dorm, the student next door may repeatedly play the one song, which gives you a giant headache! You may be an early bird while your roommate is a night owl! And still, you and your roommate may become best friends. Don’t worry if you become a little uncomfortable with some of your new experiences. I promise you that the happy experiences will outweigh the unpleasant ones. And I promise that virtually all of them will provide you with valuable lessons which will enrich your life. So, with a glow in your eye and a song in your heart, step forward to meet these new experiences!

We have confidence that your journey toward self-discovery and your progress toward finding your own passion will yield more than personal advancement. We believe that as you become members of our community of scholars, you will soon come to recognize that with the abundant opportunities for self-enrichment provided by the university, there also come responsibilities. A wise man said: "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another. “You are the inheritors of the hard work of your families and the hard work of many countless others who came before you. They built and transmitted the knowledge you will need to succeed. Now it is your turn. What knowledge will you acquire? What passions will you discover?

What will you do to build a strong and prosperous future for the generations that will come after you?

We take great pleasure in opening the door to this great step in your journey. We take delight in the many opportunities which you will find, and in the responsibilities that you will carry as citizens of your communities, your country, and the world. Welcome!