

## **Convocation 2011-2012 - August 30, 2011**

### **President John Klein Address**

Good afternoon.

We have survived earthquakes, hurricanes and the rigors of move-in day.

I am delighted to welcome you to Convocation, the official start of the new academic year.

For me and others, the beginning of an academic year is an exciting time. It's a time to start fresh, to tackle new challenges with energy and enthusiasm, to catch up with friends after the summer, and meet the new people on campus.

For those new on campus, it's a time to adjust to being out of your normal milieu, to set up new schedules and routines, and to make new friends.

It's the time for us all to set goals, and to begin the work necessary to achieve them. I encourage you to make 2011-2012 YOUR year.

We are Randolph College, and together we can make a difference to this institution. For 120 years, this College has stood for academic excellence and a commitment to the liberal arts.

Just as importantly, this institution has come to stand for its independence of thought, its acceptance of diversity, and its dedication to a strong Honor Code. Our community members are creative, intelligent, talented, energetic, and passionate about their beliefs and interests. The faculty, students, and staff in the audience today are true examples of that.

### **Students**

Just look at our senior class - The Class of 2012.

For three years, you have watched other classes put on their robes and funny hats and walk down this aisle. Now it is your turn. This is your final year. You have the opportunity to do some wonderful work on your capstone project. You will set the tone for the student body. You will decide what you will do post-Randolph. Despite the serious work and important decisions, I hope that you enjoy this year with your friends, and the activities and traditions that you love.

I want to recognize the other Odds and Evens here today, the Classes of 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Each individual at Randolph is important, and each of you has an important role in our community. Whether you are a first-year trying to learn the ropes, a sophomore trying to decide on a major, or a junior anticipating the valued traditions of Ring Week, you all have something to offer Randolph College.

I hope you will join me in extending a special welcome to our newest class, the Class of 2015.

You come from 22 states, plus the Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C., and from as far away as Alaska to right here in Lynchburg, and from 8 countries, including Vietnam, Bangladesh, China, and Nepal, among others. You are a diverse, bright, and interesting group. Among you are students with experience as leaders, students who have received many academic awards, and students who are stellar on the athletic field as well as in the classroom – in other words, you are very much like our current community of scholars and leaders. This new class of “Odds” includes people whose talents range from bonsai experts to Eagle Scouts to playwrights—and just about everything in between.

We are proud to welcome you to our community. You have a significant opportunity ahead of you during the next four years. There is so much you can learn, so much you can grow, so many life-long friends that you can make. If you ask the seniors in the room, I’m sure they will tell you it goes by quickly. It is unlikely that you will ever have four years again like the ones you spend here. This is your chance to make the most of them.

### **Faculty and Staff**

We are Randolph and that means a faculty that was rated in the *Princeton Review* as one of the top 20 faculties in the country.

Please join me in welcoming back all of our faculty members.

Dennis Stevens will introduce our three new full-time faculty members later in the program. I would like to recognize a few of our outstanding faculty members who have recently received honors.

- Jennifer Gauthier, a Communication Studies professor, has earned her second Fulbright and will spend the fall semester in Montreal, Quebec serving as Research Chair in North American Society and Culture at Concordia University. She will be conducting research on First Nations cinema at the National Film Board of Canada.
- Jim Peterson, an English professor and director of the Creative Writing Program, has a poetry book titled, *The Evolution of Eve*, to be released on Sept. 30.
- Katrin Schenk, a physics professor, was recently awarded a 2 year, \$200,000 grant from the Alzheimer’s Association for her mobile monitoring project.

Let’s again give a hand to all of our faculty members for everything they do for the College.

I also welcome the College’s staff, current and new members, who have been working hard all summer to get the College ready for you and the new academic year.

### **College Achievements**

We are Randolph and that means that we celebrate successes from our past and prepare for even greater success in the future.

2011-2012 promises to be a year for the entire College to celebrate. Our new student enrollment and total enrollment are higher than they have been in some years. Alumnae giving participation and dollars are up. And we have undertaken one of the most significant renovation projects in decades. The \$6 million Student Center renovation was fully funded by alumnae and promises to transform the center of campus and offer more amenities for students, staff, and faculty.

The Student Center was not the only capital project going on this summer. I hope that you will check out the following campus locations and see the improvements for yourself.

- A new teaching and learning center, including the Learning Resource Center and the Writing Center, has been added on the main floor of the library as we completed Phase II of the library renovation.
- The conference rooms, bathrooms and lounge areas near the dining hall were completely renovated as we relocated Randolph's new Campus Store to that location. This area is now known as Caldwell Commons.
- The College's tennis courts are being resurfaced and should be finished in September.
- A more visible and welcoming information and reception desk was added to Main Hall lobby.
- Main Grounds has been temporarily relocated to the old Learning Resource Center along Main Hall corridor, and the Skeller has been temporarily relocated to Cheatham and will be open after normal dinner hours.

As exciting as accomplishments and new construction are, the most important reason we have to celebrate this year is right in this room.

Everyone on this campus is an original, yet each of us is part of a community. This community consists of about 1000 individuals who place priority on learning, on honor and respect, and on living life to the fullest.

Our College family extends throughout the world and includes more than 12,000 alumnae and alumni.

We are all Randolph College. And that is something to be proud of. As so many alumnae tell me, "This place changed my life!"

Have a wonderful year!