

Convocation Excerpts

Friday, August 26, 2016, 9 a.m.

Good morning. Welcome to the 2016 Miami University Convocation, a celebration of the opening of the new academic year.

Please join me in a round of applause to the Men's Glee Club, the Miami Symphony Trumpet Ensemble, the university color guard, and the physical facilities staff who set up the quad, for all their contributions today.

Good morning class of 2020, parents, faculty, staff and friends and in the words of the Miami Tribe, aya niihkaaninka.

Welcome.

I have been looking forward to meeting the Class of 2020 – you obviously have a clear “**vision**” for the future. As Miami's new president, I also moved in this summer, so I have been especially looking forward to welcoming the Class of 2020. We are first-years together with the privilege of learning at this remarkable university! (And, like you, my wife and I still have boxes full of stuff we haven't figured out where to put, yet).

Miami has a history of more than two hundred years, a widely recognized high-quality educational experience in the present, and a passion and capacity to equip you to make the world a better place in the future.

The numbers help tell the story. We have more than 3,800 new first-year Miami students with us today – a very large, very talented, and very diverse class! You come from 36 countries, 44 states, and the District of Columbia, and from 1,150 different high schools in the United States alone (and 200 out-of-the country high schools). 44.3 percent of you are from outside Ohio; 15.5 percent of you are multicultural students; another 7.7 percent

of you are from another country; 52% of you are women; and 12.4% of you are sons and daughters of Miamians.

You bring optimism, passion, and love of learning – virtues that we will nourish further. You are beginning a journey of living and learning with people who may be very different from you. Think about it! Every interaction at Miami could be introducing you to the professor who will be your mentor, or to the classmate who will become your best friend, or to the person who will be your business partner in your first entrepreneurial venture.

To make these opportunities happen, you will need **courage**. You will need to seek real **unity** beyond superficial collaboration. And you will need abundant **imagination**. Like those incredibly resourceful students in *Spare Parts*, you will sometimes find yourself facing long odds against daunting challenges, you will discover that unlikely people can contribute unexpected solutions when you welcome their input, and you will find success through creativity, innovation, and synergy.

What kind of **courage** will you need? At Miami, you'll need to challenge yourself in class, and sometimes in front of the class. You'll ask to join a rec sports team. You'll audition for a play. You'll have just enough time to finish a project before you present it for evaluation. You'll speak up for someone who couldn't do it alone.

In all these instances, you may have to step outside your comfort zone. Like the high school students you read about this summer, you will, I hope, fail at least once. Don't fear it. Learn from it. And like those students, don't let it stop you. Pivot, persevere, and let your passion lead you to success.

How will you build **unity**? First, you'll need to meet people. A lot of people. They're meeting new people, too, so it will be good. You'll strategize together in class, collaborate on mock trial or club soccer, sing in the Glee club or A Cappella, maybe volunteer with a service group. You will engage others who have perspectives, backgrounds, and identities different from yours. Savor those differences, strive to understand them, and learn from them. That diversity reflects the world where you will live for the rest of your life, and this is a great place to embrace it. When you discover disagreement, stay engaged and celebrate the things that unite you. Find common ground, like when Oscar and Luis bonded over cars, so you can move forward together, defy the odds, and succeed.

How will you unleash **imagination**? Your participation in the shaping of the world, your courage and engagement with others, means that you are, in a way, the first to see the future. You exercise the remarkable human capacity for reflection, analysis, forecast, and synthesis in order to find the path that will lead to the best outcome for individuals and society. Our liberal arts courses will help you develop this kind of critical thinking. You know how to manage complexity, but you also recognize when the simple, straightforward answer is best, as the Carl Hayden team did when they designed Stinky with PVC pipe, a balloon, and a tape measure.

The world needs people with courage, unity, and imagination. The old answers are not going to solve the challenges of our time. In a dynamic, evolutionary world, change is the norm and fearless, inclusive innovation is the key. Your education here at Miami will empower you to be one of those people. That is the vision that we share with you, the class of 2020.

I thank Joshua Davis whose book shows us the inherent dignity of the four students, and the strength of human spirit that led them to higher achievements than they thought possible.

Recognizing the dignity in others is at the core of Miami's Code of Love and Honor.

You are entering Miami at a special time. I encourage you to participate in activities throughout the year, build your capacity to reach out to others, and learn from every experience.

The four students in "Spare Parts" epitomized what the virtues of courage, unity and imagination can achieve, and what we expect of this amazing Class of 2020 to demonstrate.

This summer was a difficult one. Senseless loss of life. Black lives cut short. Police officers' lives cut short. Members of the LGBTQT community's lives cut short. Members of the international community lives cut short.

This university is a sign of hope for a more peaceful and inclusive world. Class of 2020 you are the future. You can be that needed catalyst of positive change. You can help shape an all-inclusive community.

Dedicate yourself to being ONE MIAMI – embracing everyone, no matter their background, experience, nationality, sexual orientation, identity, race, religion, or other difference. We invite everyone to be a part of this extraordinary place.

This is a community of Love and Honor, not hate and disrespect, condemnation or belittling. Love and Honor is our greeting known by alumni around the world. It is our Code. It is our way of life. It is in our DNA. It will now be a part of yours.

Again, welcome!

Thank you to all who contributed and participated this morning, and my sincere best wishes for a successful, challenging, and exciting Miami Experience.