

# Heidelberg Fall 2015 Opening Convocation

## President's Remarks

25 August 2015

Good morning. It is an awesome day to be a Student Prince!

Let me formally welcome our first-year students and transfers (and their families) to Heidelberg University. Thank you for choosing our school for your school! I hope that all of you had a fabulous summer of renewal, travel, work, getting ready, and fun.

Our family vacation this summer was two separate weeks of car and hotel travel to visit colleges for interviews with our rising high school senior daughter. One year from now, I will expect her to be sitting like you right now starting college ... somewhere.

We are beginning our 166<sup>th</sup> year of educating young women and men in the great tradition and advancement of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and in professional education. That is what we do. Our focus is on your *Education Excellence* and our passion is for your *Student Success*. We want you to succeed academically and in all other ways here. We want you to be ready to succeed in your chosen jobs, graduate schools, careers, and rich paths of distinctive lives.

To all of our returning students, we are sincerely grateful for your continuing choice to attend this historic institution. We do not take your decision for granted. Our upper classmen play a special leadership role in this Opening Convocation by being here today. Thank you.

To all of our great returning and new Faculty and Staff who bring their dedicated talent and commitment to Heidelberg every day, we express deep appreciation. We are working together to transform the learning and living experience at Heidelberg to strengthen the educational value for all students. Thank you.

Our guest speaker this morning is Dr. Wesley Renfro ('03/Tiffin), who will be introduced momentarily. Dr. Renfro is an assistant professor of political science at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. Wes was a History and Philosophy double major Honors student who excelled in everything that he

touched, including Model UN and Greek life leadership. If we had offered the *PlusOneAdvantage Free MBA* (Hint!) a decade ago, I am certain that he would have that degree too. Welcome back to your campus, Wes, and thank you!

Our 308 first-year students and transfers are a strong group of men and women with many talents and accomplishments. Let me say a few words about them.

They bring richness, diversity, energy and intellect to our community. About 6% are from Tiffin, 6% are also from Heidelberg legacy families, 9% are from Michigan, 14% are in our Honors Program, 20% are Heidelberg Scholars, 24% are minority students, 24% are from out-of-state, 39% are first generation college students in their families, 42% are females, 58% are males, 64% are interested in Division III athletics, and 100% of our new students are ready to succeed at Heidelberg.

Our entering class is a smart one. They arrive as a group with the highest recorded average GPA and ACT cohort scores in our school history, and that includes 8% of the class who graduated with perfect 4.0 GPAs in high school. And while our female students have brought one of the highest recorded female cohort GPA/ACT scores to campus, the male students are entering Heidelberg with the highest recorded average GPA and ACT scores for males in our history. That is awesome!

All of our first-year students and transfers are interesting individuals. One of them is our second student from Hawaii in school history and five of them are from California ... Excellent reach across the country! Two of our new students have already spent time in Heidelberg, Germany. We are honored to welcome new students from India, Malaysia and Uganda ... Excellent reach across the world!

One of our students performed in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on TV. One of our students was the inaugural winner of their high school community service hero award. And one female student came here to start Women's Lacrosse only to discover that we are already searching for a coach to do exactly that ... Great timing!

To all new students, I want you to take full advantage of your exciting curricular and co-curricular choices at Heidelberg. Please do not sit on the sidelines of your passions or compromise the power of your potential while in college! Heidelberg is all about engagement.

With a warm and friendly spirit, this campus is a truly caring place where new and returning students can connect with their professors and with each other in meaningful ways. Explore, learn, hang out, ask each other lots of questions, study, work, play and pursue your dreams here together at Heidelberg! Follow Dean Dustin Brentlinger's strong advice and build new relationships with classmates who are quite different than you because that is where you really learn and grow.

I encourage all of you to finish our AIM Hei Common Reading this fall and be ready for the class discussions in the middle of the semester. We are reading *The Sunflower* (1969) by Simon Wiesenthal. I have finished the book, so jump in too ... including *The Symposium* essays!

Following my annual habit of making a pair of additional reading suggestions on this occasion, because we should all read more than we do, I strongly recommend two books that touch the same core issues and central questions about the human condition as *The Sunflower* but in quite different ways.

The first book is *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). It is a philosophically complex work that challenges the false assumptions, blinded virtues, and harsh moralities of Europe at that time which then fed much of what would subsequently happen in two world wars.

The second book is *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (1965) by the American historian William Sheridan Allen (1932-2013). It is an incredibly detailed and graphic account of how one German town lost its soul to the Nazis between 1930 and 1935.

It is our privilege to have each one of you here to teach, mentor and serve in support of your academic and career aspirations. You make us a better school by being here and we want you each to graduate in four years. Let us hold tightly to that goal as we declare ...

### **Everyone Matters ... All Students Rising!**

Good luck to all of you and especially to the Class of 2019!

Thank you.