

Opening Freshmen Convocation

August 2004

Good afternoon one and all!

On behalf of the many Heidelberg alumni who enriched this campus during their days as students;

On behalf of the dedicated College staff who are committed to helping you meet your aspirations,

And, especially, from my distinguished faculty colleagues who will be your teachers, advisers, and mentors,

From all of us: Welcome to Heidelberg College!

Would all of you please help me welcome these new students!

Well, students. It is finally here: Your first real day as a Heidelberg College student! For many of you it couldn't come soon enough.

I've heard from many of you that summer was, at times, not too exciting.

You found yourself so desperate for entertainment you watched reruns of "Celebrity Poker" and got hooked on those "American Chopper" guys on the Discovery Channel. The highlight of the day? Remixing the songs on your iPod.

And be honest with me, some of you actually spent money to see "Catwoman" and "Harold and Kumar Go to the White Castle."

You should know that History Professor David Hogan has authored a book on the history of White Castle. And I'm pretty sure it doesn't include any mention of Harold and Kumar.

Over the summer, you listened to Usher's "Confessions," Hoobastank's "Reason," and jibjab.com "This Land is Your Land" waaaay too many times.

Many of you finished "The DaVinci Code" and started the South Beach Diet . . . again. It was a summer of numbers. 38 "Jeopardy" wins for Ken Jennings, and counting. 8 Olympic medals for Michael Phelps. 6 Tour de France wins for Lance Armstrong. 3 husbands for Jennifer Lopez [I can't believe I know that!] 2 Spiderman movies (I had to say that for my daughter who is a huge Spiderman fan) and 1 long goodbye to old friends as you headed off to college.

But, here's the number we are most excited about: You are the largest entering class at Heidelberg in over 30 years.

The student speaker at Commencement last May, Jeff Garvin – who by the way is now permanently employed by Heidelberg – reminded his classmates of one of the best things about Heidelberg, and I quote: “When you look around, you see people you never imagined you’d meet before you came here, and people you’ll never forget once you leave.”

I look forward to getting to know each of you, whether it is in Rock Creek Café in Seiberling gym, working together on a service project, cheering for our team at a football game, or just walking across campus,

You see, Heidelberg is small enough that we will get to know one another. And big enough to carry you beyond Tiffin and around the world.

Our dedicated faculty will challenge and change you, nag and nurture you. They will expect a great deal from you and from themselves.

All of us – faculty and staff – want you to succeed and become a Heidelberg graduate. You have my assurance that we will do our part.

Now, you must do your part.

Let me offer you some advice.

Go to class. That sounds simple enough. But when it is raining and you stayed up too late and don’t feel like getting out of bed, when there is no mom or dad to holler at you that it is time to get up, when it means missing “The Young and the Restless” or the 9 a.m. Sportscenter, it takes some discipline to do it.

Join something. A team. A club. A cause. A service project. Use these experiences to become a stronger leader. Do good works. Service is a tradition at Heidelberg and a legacy of our founders.

I ask you to join us in giving back to our communities and the College.

And finally, remember that the last piece of pizza in the box will make a mighty tasty breakfast if you do decide to stay in bed in the morning.

Parents, my wife and I have two children in college. We’ve learned a lot since they went to college. You can expect your students to stay up too late, play music too loud, watch too much TV, go out without a jacket, leave the bed unmade, change their major – several times, and eat junk food at all hours of the day and night.

Don’t worry. If they get the big stuff right, if they don’t forget what they came to college for, if they make good choices, the small stuff won’t matter.

As a parent, believe me that's easier to say than it is to do. But if you do anything, continue to encourage your student to stay focused the goal – graduation and the opportunity to lead a better life.

Today, I invite the parents - and step parents, siblings and grandparents, spouses and sweethearts, old friends and new who are here with our students to visit campus often. Please know that this president and my colleagues are committed to your student's success.

In 2008, we will be together again as a group to celebrate graduation.

These students will be wearing academic regalia.

On that glorious day, family members will again be carrying boxes --this time, packing the car with all that has been accumulated in a college career. Mismatched lamps. Prizes from boxes of Captain Crunch. Pictures of Mr. Right who turned out to be only Mr. Right Now. And some of people whose names you can't remember. CDs and DVDs. T-shirts commemorating a litany of special events – including the T-shirt you received today.

And you will take with you those things that can't be boxed up. Memories of great friends and wonderful teachers, disappointments and victories, adventures shared and opportunities taken.

Today, you begin creating those memories. The journey is under way. Great times are ahead!

You have made a wonderful choice: Heidelberg College, or as it is called in our alma mater,

“ Sweet Alma Home.”

To our students and your families, best wishes for a successful and joyous journey. And, welcome home!