

Heidelberg Fall 2020 Opening Convocation

President's Remarks

10 September 2020

Good morning to the Class of 2024 and to all transfer and graduate students! Thank you very much for making Heidelberg University your college of choice ... especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

This pandemic challenges us to become a stronger community. I am grateful to all students who quarantined during our first week of online classes while we waited for everyone's test results two weeks ago. It was fun to greet many of you while delivering dinners to your rooms for two nights. Bravo to Dean of Student Affairs Chris Abrams for helping to deliver lunch and dinner to students every day that week!

Let us all be responsible for our semester and take care of each other. I also signed the *Heidelberg Pledge of Health & Safety* and I submit my COVID-19 Daily Health Self-Evaluation too. We will succeed together!

Welcome to our 171st year of educating young women and men through *Professional Liberal Arts* learning, complemented and enhanced by cocurricular and extracurricular programming. We take your education, engagement, success, graduation, and placement seriously. That is what we care about. In four years, we will be standing in front of your Class of 2024 Graduation banner ... as we stand before the great Class of 2020 banner here today.

I extend appreciation to our upper-class students for returning to campus for Residential Learning or choosing our new Remote Learning option.

Our Faculty and Staff have worked diligently and energetically since the campus closed in March to prepare for *Responsible: Restart Heidelberg*. We are all committed to providing a safe and successful fall semester for students and their families. Thank you to everyone!

Our keynote speaker this morning is Heidelberg alum and U.S. Marshall, Mr. Patrick Turner ('06). I met Patrick once about 8 years ago when he came to campus as a guest speaker in some Criminal Justice classes. He might not remember our conversation. I sure do! Impressive then and now. He is smart, dedicated, hard-working, sincere, honest, and caring. Thank you, Patrick, for delivering your student message from Buffalo.

We are welcoming **346** new students to our school this fall, including **325** first-time first-year students. You are an impressive group with many talents and interests!

One freshman solo from Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, and North Carolina; Ten other states fill out the incoming class; New undergrad and grad students from Columbia, France, the West Bank, Italy, England, and Germany have joined us; 8% of our students are from Tiffin and Seneca County; 8% are Heidelberg legacy families; 13% are in our Honors Program; 16% are from outside Ohio; 16% had a 4.0 or higher GPA in high school; 18% identify as underrepresented students; 24% competed on Scholars Days; 48% identify as females; 49% are first generation college students in their families; 51% identify as males; 62% are DIII student-athletes; and **100%** of our incoming students want to engage and succeed at Heidelberg.

Some interesting stories too. One of our new students made their Heidelberg decision after visiting the campus in the 8th grade ... great conviction five years later! Three first years played high school volleyball together ... and they are now Student Princes together! Many of our American students have already traveled to great places like Ghana, Costa Rica, and throughout Europe ... we will encourage more! And finally, one entering student worked all summer at their hometown Dunkin' Donuts ... which I personally feel is beyond awesome!

Following my annual habit of making some reading suggestions on this occasion, I recommend three great novels, all first reads by me, written by three great writers.

The first book is *Persuasion* (1818) by English born Jane Austen (1775-1817). This was Austen's last of six novels and it was published the year after she died at the age of 41. Two hundred years later, the prose remains beautiful and the characters are still entertaining. Austen is part of that historically iconic British literary canon.

The second book is *The Bell Jar* (1963) by American born Sylvia Plath (1932-1963). This was Plath's only novel and it was published shortly before she committed suicide at the age of 30. Stunning prose and a suffocating story. Plath won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry posthumously for *The Collected Poems* in 1981.

The third book is *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) by Canadian born Alice Munro (1931-). A famed short-story writer, and like Plath, this is Munro's only novel. Wonderful story telling through rich dialogue and sharp language about growing up. Munro turned 89 in July and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013.

To all new and returning students, get engaged and be intentional about everything. Perhaps more than ever while staring down the health and economic challenges facing us, grab your *Berg Big Opportunities* to gain your *Berg Life Advantages* here.

It is our privilege to teach, mentor, and serve each one of you in support of your academic and career aspirations. Our shared goal is that all of you graduate successfully from Heidelberg in four years or sooner to continue your journey and pursue your *Life of Purpose with Distinction*.

Good luck to all of you and especially to the Class of 2024.

We learn, grow, and go forward together!

Thank you.