



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Speech: President's First-Year Student Convocation

Date: Sunday, August 26, 2018

Welcome Class of 2022!

I would like to take a moment to introduce a few very special guests with us here today:

My wife, Ruthie, the First-Lady of Ohio University...

Steve Patterson – Mayor for the City of Athens...

Members of my Executive Leadership Team; many whom you already met...

The fine faculty of Ohio University and the academic deans who are with us here today...

Please stand so we can recognize you.

Your Student Trustees, Faith Voinovich and Austin McClain...

A group that is very special to me, and one that I hope you will become involved with at some point during your time here, the Presidential Leadership Society...

And your Student Senate President who we will hear more from a bit later, Maddie Sloat...

This is a new beginning. This is a new chapter of your life. I remember my own experience going off to college for the first time and the range of emotions I felt. On this day, I want each of you to make a promise to yourself – the same promise I made to myself many decades ago.

Aspire to be more than what you are today. Learn more. Explore more. Dream more. You will be better as a result and so will our society.

Like Dr. Pina and Dr. Secuban, I, too, am still fairly new to Ohio University, having only been President here a little over a year. And being a new President is much like starting a new job anywhere – you begin a bit unsure, but after a while, you find your way and it all clicks.

Sure, I had been President at two other universities before coming to Athens, however, this was different. A different part of the country; a different culture; a unique opportunity.

In order to be an effective leader and determine our proper path forward, I knew I first had to understand and discover for myself what it means to be a member of the Bobcat family. So, I had to learn my way around campus... Find the quickest route from Morton to Bentley... Learn my way around campus... Learn where all the dining halls were located.

In order to better understand the student experience, I toured Baker Center and Chubb Hall... I carried boxes on Move-in Day... Visited Stroud's Run... Walked uptown and enjoyed some of our unique Athens eateries like Casa Nueva, Bagel Street Deli, Burrito Buggy and Goodfella's Pizza! I've sat in your classrooms and walked through your residence halls. In a way, my first year of exploration was much like the experience you all will have in the coming weeks. I have fallen in love with Ohio University, and I know you will too. Especially because of the people.

Our faculty are leaders in their chosen fields of study and many are internationally recognized for their research.

You see, I am President, but first and foremost, I am an academic. So, I recognize academic excellence in my colleagues. And rest assured, you will be learning from some of the best in higher education right here at Ohio University.

Let's turn our attention to the video screen to hear from some of them now.

(Faculty video highlights several faculty, Chair of Faculty Senate, and Executive VP and Provost; lasts approximately 3 minutes).

Dr. Joe McLaughlin:

Hello, I am Faculty Senate Chair and Professor of English, Joe McLaughlin.

On behalf of the fine faculty of Ohio University, it is my great privilege to extend the warmest of greetings to each of you as you begin the most important journey of your lives.

I invite you today to approach your education not simply as the attainment of a set of skills or preparation for a career, but as an awakening to a world that is amazingly beautiful and good and mysterious and strange.

The faculty of Ohio University are your partners in this journey. My colleagues and I are scholars, scientists, artists, critics, engineers, leaders, and healers. Like all of you,

we come to this University from various backgrounds. We too had to find our way in this world and now we have a great deal of wisdom to share with you.

I turn to my colleagues now to share their tips for how you can make the most of your college experience.

[Various faculty share advice]

Dr. Chaden Djalali (Executive VP and Provost):

The professors at Ohio University are more than just teachers—they're mentors who genuinely care about your future. They are approachable, accessible, and committed to your success.

On this, the eve of the first day of classes, I hope you realize how fortunate you are to be given this opportunity to learn from world-class faculty in a wide variety of disciplines.

And prepare to learn something new about yourself during this time as well. There will likely never be another time in your life with so many opportunities to challenge yourself, learn from your mistakes, and explore your interests.

Decide now to make your college experience transformative. Because you'll be back here in the Convocation Center wearing a funny hat at graduation before you know it... sad that the time at Ohio University went by so quickly. Good luck and welcome to the Bobcat family!

At Ohio University, excellence is our hallmark. Outstanding people, ideas, and programs drive our educational mission. As one of the newest members of the Bobcat family, I want to introduce you to the five Core Values of Ohio University students – you'll notice they are featured behind me:

- Community: Become a responsible member of a diverse community and positive representative of OHIO's values
- Citizenship: Contribute to the advancement of society both now and for future generations
- Civility: Be respectful of the rights, opinions, and dignity of others
- Character: Exercise personal integrity inside and outside the classroom

- And Commitment: Practice your beliefs and commit to OHIO's values – community, citizenship, civility, and character

Always remember, you are here not only representing your family and your hometown, but you are also now a representative of Ohio University and a resident of Athens. You need to take care of yourself, take care of one another, and take care of the place where you live and call home.

Our founders, Manasseh Cutler and Rufus Putnam, believed that education was the key to opportunity. For more than 214 years, Ohio University has helped students achieve their dreams and goals. Now, a few years ago, a new university tradition began. You took your official class photo! What a great looking group. Someone needs to Tweet that.

[Class of 2022 Photo shows on Screen]

I can always count of a retweet from Dr. Hall-Jones and Dr. Pina. Even though social media is so prevalent in our lives these days, we really hope to connect with you in person! You will learn that we take our jobs very seriously. But, as you saw in the golf-cart video, we are also capable of having fun. We are passionate about Ohio University, we are committed to each of your successes, and we are approachable - on the street, on College Green after this ceremony, and in other places around Athens.

Personal connections are at the heart of the Ohio University experience. And it is up to you to seize those opportunities, to engage with your professors, to connect with your peers, to immerse yourself not only in your studies, but also in the community. In doing so, you will be transformed. That's the promise of Ohio University.

Thank you, and GO BOBCATS!