

East Tennessee State University

Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University

Office of the President Speeches and Videos

8-19-2016

2016 August 19 - New Student Convocation

Office of the President, East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/president-speeches>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Office of the President, East Tennessee State University, "2016 August 19 - New Student Convocation" (2016). *Office of the President Speeches and Videos*. 27.

<https://dc.etsu.edu/president-speeches/27>

This Slides is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Office of the President Speeches and Videos by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

New Student Convocation
August 19, 2016

Good afternoon, and to the Class of 2020, it is my pleasure and honor to welcome you to East Tennessee State University.

It is Friday afternoon, which is probably everyone's favorite day of the week. But it has not been just any ordinary week. I want you to step back and take a few moments to reflect on the past week. Think back to the process of loading your belongings into the back of your car. Think about the people you said goodbye to this week – the family members you left at home and the friends who stayed back or who went to other colleges across the nation. Think about the process of leaving everything that seemed familiar for the past 18 years and starting something brand new....something epic...and something life-changing.

This will be one of the most transformative times of your lives. Already, you have met some amazing new people. You have moved into your new home for the upcoming year. Your followers on Instagram or Snapchat and your number of Facebook friends have already risen dramatically. And soon,

many of you will find out what it is like to do your own laundry for the first time.

In all seriousness, this is an amazing time. These are moments you will remember for the rest of your lives. You are surrounded by individuals who will become lifelong friends, colleagues, and confidants. You are also surrounded by faculty and staff who are dedicated to your education and to your future.

The next four years will be the most rewarding years of your life, BUT...I firmly believe that you only get out of college what you put into it. College is more than a collection of credit hours along the path to a degree. Your college experience will be defined by the investments of your time, talents, and energy, both within and outside of the classroom.

Do not simply walk to class and then go home. I challenge you to experience more. I challenge you to truly experience East Tennessee State University. Go see a play or attend one of our many musical performances. Attend a lecture in the Culp Center or visit one of our museums or galleries. Attend a group fitness course at our Center for Physical Activity and, if you are feeling especially daring, sign up to experience our new adventure

course. Cheer for the Bucs at an athletic game. And even on your busiest days, schedule time to simply walk the campus and take in the beauty of East Tennessee.

I encourage you to become active as an undergraduate. Join one of our more than 230 clubs and organizations or participate in intramurals or one of our sports clubs.

It is a fantastic year to be coming to college. We find ourselves in the midst of uncertain landscape nationally with a contentious presidential election season in full swing. It is in times like this that you will find obvious and significant value in paying attention, being active and engaging in debate. Your college experience affords you those opportunities.

I encourage you to take them, but do so in a way that allows you to learn about differences and lets you explore diverse perspectives. That is what the university experience is all about. These learning opportunities will help you be better informed as you develop your own opinions on issues that matter to you, to your family, to your friends, to your region and to this nation.

I know you have probably gotten plenty of advice over the summer about going off to college – advice from your parents, your best friends, your aunts and uncles, your former teachers and maybe even complete strangers. But I feel compelled to give you just you a little more as you near the first day of classes. This is my list of the Top 10 things I wish I had known when I started college:

1. Get to know your faculty members. They are not only experts in their fields, but they have spent their careers nurturing and mentoring students such as yourself.
2. Get involved early in clubs and organizations. Not only is this a great way to meet new people, but it is a chance to deepen your understanding of the institution around you.
3. Study at least three hours a day. No matter how much Red Bull or Diet Coke you drink the night before tests, cramming will not get you through college.
4. Borrow only what you need, not what you want. I learned this lesson the hard way and spent decades paying off my student loans that went more for the excess of my material desires than paying for college.

5. Get to know those around you, for the friends you make today will be those that you have for the remainder of your life. Take time to enjoy college, but only after you have studied those three hours.
6. Take more than 12 credit hours each semester if you plan to graduate on time. The math is relatively simple:

$$12 \times 8 = 96 \text{ and } 15 \times 8 = 120$$

If you have not registered for 15 hours, please meet an advisor next week to see what we can do to help you find another class.

7. Avoid the distractions that present themselves along the way and remember that you are making an investment to be here that will yield dividends at commencement. Those distractions may be old friends who want you to come home for a high school football game, or the boss who wants you to work an extra shift, or a fraternity brother who wants you to go out on a Thursday night rather than study. The temptations will be numerous, but I cannot stress enough that those temptations will turn into patterns of action and habits that will prevent you from realizing your dreams.

8. Be mindful of your social media presence. OK, if I am being honest, this didn't apply back when I was in college. But, in more recent years, I have seen the damage those spur-of-the-moment posts, tweets and images can cause an individual even years later on job interviews, so I felt compelled to put it on the list.
9. Thank those in your life who sacrificed so that you can attend ETSU. Before you go to bed tonight, call home and say thank you. When my father dropped me off at college, his parting words were simply, "Make us proud." My first thought was freedom. I never called to say thanks and now that my father is no longer alive, I wish every day I had the chance to say that simple word.
10. Take a class in a topic for which you know nothing about, whether that be religious studies, bluegrass, geosciences or art appreciation. By doing so, you will be exposed to ideas that will expand your horizons and present you with other views of the world.

In closing, I want to once again welcome you to the ETSU family. If you see me on campus, please stop and say hello. If you

see me on the basketball court at the CPA, please do not foul me or block my shot. Come visit me during open office hours, which are every Tuesday at 8 a.m.

We are excited to have you here as a part of the ETSU family. While we are all here to help you along the journey, you must display initiative and take ownership of your future. This is not high school. You must study, you will be expected to write expository prose, you will be tested, but if you get engaged with your faculty and advisors, they will help you through the rough spots.

I hope you make the most of the next four years, for this university is ready to help make your dreams come true.

Godspeed and go Bucs!