Welcome, Class of 2018, to Clarion University's annual University Convocation and to your first official university event as new college freshmen!

Give yourselves a hand.

We come together this evening to celebrate not only the beginning of a new academic year but also your entry into our university community. As you may know, the word "convocation" means an assembly of fellow students, faculty, and staff welcoming you to an order of scholars. This event also concludes a series of activities that each of you has undergone – from preparing for years to enter college, to applying to Clarion, to orientation, to registration, to a very busy Discovery Weekend.

I do want to ask you to help me thank the many faculty, staff and fellow students who have been here for you over the summer by meeting with you at orientation, advising you on your courses, helping you move into housing this Friday, and for the many meetings, talks and emails along the way. I thank them for their commitment to you and ask you to help me thank them now.

(Applause)

This convocation also represents a beginning – a beginning of new friendships, new learning, new dreams, new opportunities for
exploration and self discovery. In joining our academic community, you have joined your fellow students, as well as the faculty, staff, and alumni of Clarion University who hold very specific values that I now ask you to live by every day as a member of our community. Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni value:

• learning;
• accomplishment;
• encouragement;
• diversity;
• civility; and
• civic engagement.

In talking about our core values, I am reminding you that with the opportunities of being a college student at Clarion come many responsibilities. First and foremost, your life is in your hands. Your love and pursuit of learning is up to you. You will have to take the initiative to seek out and construct your college life. It's all around you but you will have to step up and seize the opportunities.

So, this night, which is on the eve of your first day of your first week of your first semester, of your first year as a Clarion University college student, there are three things I encourage you to do in order to be successful. Here goes:

• Go to class every day. Don't miss a day. Going to class is Job One.
• Be ready for every day. Reading assignments, tests, papers, projects – no excuses.
• Dare to care. Make friends and be a friend. You will need them and they will need you.

You have joined us at an exciting time because Clarion University is a university under construction, a university that is building and rebuilding, literally and metaphorically.

We are building and rebuilding our campus facilities with the new student housing on Main Street, the renovation of Becht Hall into a facility dedicated to supporting many student services and programs, the renovation of Tippin Gym into a modern complex that will support our health and physical education activities and intercollegiate sports.

We are building and rebuilding our academic programs by introducing new academic programs this year such as the BSN program --- at the Clarion campus and the Doctorate in Nursing Practice, which is recruiting our first class for the 2015 summer class. In addition, the School of Education is now offering students and teachers an “endorsement” to teach online courses, the first in PASSHE history. On top of that, next year we plan to offer bachelor’s degrees in criminal justice and nutrition and fitness.

We are rebuilding academic programs throughout the university to even better respond to the needs of our society and your interests as students. An important example of this is the effort by education faculty to be more intentional about our educational offerings that can lead to dual certifications upon graduation. Superintendents throughout western PA have consistently told us that dual-certified teachers are the teachers they are most seeking to employ.

We are building and rebuilding our many programs, such as career services. This year there will be a greater focus on career services in
order to increase our support to you to help you define and pursue your career dreams.

We are building and rebuilding how we tell our compelling “Clarion University” story. We will be launching a new university website this semester and I invite you to not only enjoy the new website but to be a part of it as we ask you in many ways to tell us and the world your Clarion University story.

In closing, I would like to recognize many folks who are with us this evening and the many folks who have worked hard to make this event so special. My sincere thanks to the University Convocation Planning Committee, co-chaired by Ms. Erin Schuetz and Mr. Shawn Hoke; Mr. David Katis, our master of ceremonies; Mr. Rob Hoover, who manages this wonderful auditorium; and Dr. Stephen Johnson who worked with our students to provide our own wonderful performance this evening. In particular I would like to thank Dr. Martha Robinson, who led our procession with a wonderful bagpipe rendition. I also thank all the faculty and staff who have joined in this celebration.

Finally, to you our newest students who have now joined the Clarion University Golden Eagle Family, your success is our number one goal. Now is the time to take flight, soar high to live your life's dreams, work hard, have fun and . . . Fly, Eagles, Fly! Repeat with me . . . Fly, Eagles, Fly!

Congratulations, Class of 2018, and have an eagletastic year!