

CONVOCATION

August 27, 2009

We are off to an exciting start for the 2009-2010 academic year. New students, we are pleased that you have chosen to join us at Catawba College to pursue your undergraduate education. We look forward to getting to know you and to working with you over these next 4 years.

Returning students, we are glad to see you back. We look forward to an exceptional year in all areas of the college: in the classroom and laboratory, in student life, in the Lilly Center, in athletics, in our performing arts, in new and exciting things of which we are not even aware yet.

There is, however, one element of life at Catawba on which I wish to focus this morning: the Green Pig. Each of you was given a Green Pig pin upon entering this morning. The Green Pig is a new symbol of our commitment to the environment at Catawba College. You will be seeing signs around campus telling the tale of the Green Pig and containing suggestions encouraging us to be good stewards of the environment: they will remind us to turn out lights as we leave empty rooms, to turn off computers when not in use, not to run the water the entire time we brush our teeth, to recycle—to do the things we all know we should do but sometimes need a reminder to practice.

We are fortunate on campus to have a major recycling program already in effect; to be using some geothermal and solar resources; to having a magnificent Center for the Environment to promote green; and a number of other environmental initiatives. But more is needed. While we explore other larger efforts to make our campus environmentally balanced, the Green Pig is our new initiative to promote green consciousness among all of us in the Catawba family.

[Hand out \$5 bills.]

I just handed out 4 \$5 bills—greenbacks as paybacks for students wearing their Green Pig buttons. In order to encourage each of us to practice good green habits, we are going to be awarding cash on campus to random students wearing their Green Pig pins. For the next several weeks, a number of faculty and staff will be empowered to give out cash rewards on campus to students wearing their pins. I encourage you to join the Order of the Green Pig—wear your pins—on your shirts, your backpacks, your caps—you never know when someone might ask if you are

displaying the Green pig! And more importantly, practice the habits of being a good environmental steward. Help Catawba to erase our carbon footprint and to be a green campus in every sense of that word.

Finally, I want to offer three words of encouragement and advice as we officially begin this new academic year.

1. Develop AIMS for the year, for your entire college career, for your life. Aims, or goals, or dreams, or whatever you choose to call them are important to achievement—both personally and academically. Know what you want to accomplish this year—both inside and outside of the classroom. Have purpose for the year—be on a mission, on several missions.

Walt Disney had inscribed over an entrance to EPCOT Center this thought: “If you can dream it, you can do it.”

One of the important elements in success is learning to develop a sense of purpose—not just a purpose, (purposes, missions, goals come and go; we succeed or fail and we move on) but a sense of purpose . . . a focus on the bigger picture, the longer term . . . keeps all the minor purposes in focus. A sense of purpose is the capacity to generate goals and visions that build into greater things.

2. Focus on having a strong, positive ATTITUDE. You should develop pride in the quality of your performance—both inside and outside the classroom. Take responsibility for yourself and your circumstances and make the most of them. Have a positive, cooperative spirit that seeks to learn and grow and manifests itself in a constructive attitude.

None of us wants to be around people who are constantly complaining—who are negative about everything but themselves. No one wants to hire or work with someone who complains without being constructive, who is quick to call attention to problems but never seems to have any suggestions for solutions.

Dean Bryan Applefield has noted that not any one of us can solve all the problems that we see and know, but each of us can be a part of the solution. I encourage you to be a 1% solution for the problems and difficulties that you see around you—i.e., recognizing that you may not have all the answers or can't provide the entire solution, do what you can. Your attitude will be infectious.

3. Be ADAPTABLE. Flexibility is a necessity in today's society. Psychologist Carl Rogers has noted that "the leading threat to America today is the inability to adjust to change." During these important years of your educational process you need to prepare yourself for a rapidly changing knowledge base and for uncertain economic drivers. To do so, you must develop skills in the areas of written and spoken communication, critical thinking and problem solving, team building, and the use of technology.

You are part of a portfolio generation—futurists predict that you will average 5-7 different careers during your lifetime (N.B., that is not jobs but careers—I have held several different jobs, but have had only one career in higher education.)

Your education here should prepare you to become a lifelong learner. Learning doesn't cease when you graduate from Catawba—it is just beginning. You must focus not merely on earning a degree, but in learning how to keep learning.

Adaptability will be critical to your success in the larger world that awaits you after college.

Thus, I leave you with these 3 thoughts today:

1. Develop AIMS. Cultivate a sense of purpose.
2. Maintain a positive ATTITUDE. Contribute solutions to problems.
3. Be ADAPTABLE. Develop lifelong learning skills.

Congratulations! You live in interesting times with a world of opportunities awaiting you. We wish you the best this year at Catawba College. May God bless you!