

Welcome parents and families. Welcome faculty and staff. Welcome student leaders.

Most importantly, welcome Class of 2018. You are the reason we are here today, a day that marks the beginning of your four years of undergraduate life at Trinity College.

As we start out on this marvelous journey together, while we may not have met face to face just yet, we already have a very special bond. For both of us, it is our first year at Trinity College. You and I will share this time, imagining all of the possibilities and hoping that each year is better than the last. I am confident about the future of our College, and I expect great things from you.

Like you, I'm new here, I just moved last week. I'm still trying to find things that are in boxes somewhere, hoping that I've remembered to bring everything. I am just thrilled to be here, and I'm almost shaking with enthusiasm. Like John Legend's song "My head's underwater, but I'm breathing fine ..."

As you sit here, you may be wondering ... just who are the other people here? Who are the members of the Class of 2018?

Allow me to give you a sneak peek. There are 615 of you, hailing from 35 states in the U.S. and 37 countries.

More than 14 percent of you speak multiple languages, and more than 25 of you are three-sport athletes. Four of you are working on your pilots' licenses, and two hold black belts. ... Now that's impressive!

One of you built a Web site to help students handle academic stress. Another is a veterinary intern who has logged more than 1,500 hours in an animal shelter. Another is a nationally ranked tennis player. And another is the owner of a lobstering business.

One of you is a media artist who created a national anti-homophobia public service announcement in Canada. And yet another founded a support group for students who have been affected by drug addiction.

You are an impressive class indeed! I am proud to be starting here with you.

All 615 of you are committed to pursuing excellence inside and outside of the classroom. You have worked hard, most of you have enjoyed incredible support from family and friends, and you come to Trinity well prepared. Make no mistake ... your classes here will be challenging, and your professors will push you to new heights, force you to confront moral challenges such as you've read about in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, and help you explore who you are as a scholar and, more importantly, as a person. I urge you to remember that your education here is not an outcome but a process; you are here to analyze, to explore, to discern, and to learn how to write, speak, and think better. YOU are starting on the road to lifelong learning. You will learn much from your professors, and they will learn much from you.

And who am I? I am a neuroscientist; I study the brain and developmental disabilities such as autism. Certainly at the time that I chose this field, and even now, I have had to be a pioneer. How many black women neuroscientists do you know? Also, I consider myself a global citizen; I have lived and worked for

periods of time in Malaysia, Paris, Zurich, and Edinburgh. I have a husband and two children and a yellow Labrador, and I've had to figure out how to balance career and family!

I also want everyone to know just how happy I am to be here and how proud I am to be the president of Trinity College, at this time, right here in the heart of Hartford.

As we get to know each other, you'll find that I like to talk about books that I have read. This summer, as a result of this new job that I have, I've been reading *Trinity College in the Twentieth Century*, a fact-filled volume of Trinity's history, written by College archivist Peter Knapp, himself a proud Trinity graduate, Class of 1965.

It is amazing to me how some of the quotes I came across in the book are relevant today. For instance, back in 1936, when then-President Remsen Ogilby gave his annual report, he said of Trinity, "We [the College] should bind the city [of Hartford] to us with hoops of steel."

Now here in 2014, just last week, I tweeted the news that Hartford was ranked No. 17 on a list of the 50 Best College Towns in America. Now, of course, all of us here today already recognize that Hartford—more specifically Trinity College—is a great place to be. But it certainly is gratifying when others recognize just how special this place is.

You now have the unique opportunity of experiencing a top liberal arts education within a vibrant urban environment. Community learning possibilities abound here, and you'll be able to work and volunteer your time at countless nonprofits within walking distance of the College. Your career development options are endless, as you will be able to take advantage of internships and job shadowing at a variety of locations, including the State Capitol. Our campus provides an eclectic, varied environment that will foster both your academic and personal growth. Getting to know our neighbors here in Hartford is what makes us feel safe and secure; this is our home.

While you are here at Trinity, you'll have the chance to explore new ideas and new topics. I challenge you to reach beyond your comfort zone, take classes on subjects that you've never even heard of that help you to analyze a problem from a different perspective, reach out to someone with a background very different from your own, take on a leadership role in an organization or create a new one, and study abroad and learn a new language and culture; take steps to achieve your most ambitious aspirations! If you do, you'll leave Trinity in four years with a broad foundation that will serve you well in the next step of your life, whatever that step may be.

Parents and families, I have a special message for you. I want you to know that it's OK if you cry when you say goodbye to your children. No matter what they say, they're probably expecting it, and, in fact, will be disappointed if you don't. But please keep in mind that your children have earned this independence. They have excelled in their schoolwork and gained admission into one of the finest colleges in the U.S. There's no need for you to hover over them to try to remove all risks and obstacles that might come their way. This is their time to meet success or failure on their own and to grow from their experiences. Parents, your job isn't to make everything perfect; it's to do exactly what you have done ... to get your children to where they already are today.

I want you to know that while your children are here, we will provide the support systems they need. We will allow them the freedom they will need to grow, while offering them a safety net. Please know that we are serious about our commitment to Title IX, which prohibits sexual discrimination in education

in any way, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This is my pledge to you; we will do our very best to arm our students with the knowledge they can use to keep themselves safe, and we will provide the safest environment that we can. At the same time, I ask that you, members of the Class of 2018, take responsibility for your own health and safety as well. Because this topic is so important, I have created a Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct that I will chair myself in the upcoming year.

Before closing, I would like to mention career development again, as I know that it is on the minds of many—parents and students alike. The liberal arts prepare you for lifelong learning, for leadership and innovation, and for engaging and fulfilling careers, no matter your field of choice. Through your course work, career exploration treks, internships, the annual Entrepreneurship Competition, and more, we will help you take full advantage of opportunities here in Hartford and far beyond the city's borders.

Our alumni also play a key role as you prepare for life beyond Trinity. Just last year, Justin Maccarone, Trinity Class of 1981, a judge in our Entrepreneurship Competition, was so impressed by one of the competition's finalists that he offered her a job at his energy-trading firm. By joining Trinity's tight-knit community, you have become part of a rich network of alumni and alumnae who are committed to the success of their fellow Bantams.

In just about 10 minutes of speaking, I've taken you from your first day at Trinity College to your first job. You and I know that a great deal will happen between now and then. We will learn together, we will grow together, we will even make mistakes together. And I promise you that we will have fun together! I urge you to make the most of it all—remember, reach beyond your comfort zone. Set ambitious goals, and strive to achieve them. The entire Trinity College community is here to guide you along on this most excellent adventure.

Welcome Class of 2018!