

2015 OPENING CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Dr. Michael Bitzer, Provost

On behalf of the faculty

I'd like to add my warm welcome to you all

For the start of our 165th academic year.

We are excited not just for our returning students

To see their familiar faces back in Salisbury,

But to our new students, both first-time freshmen

And transfer students who join the Catawba community.

I also want to extend a welcome

To our new faculty who are joining us in

Several academic departments.

If you are a new member of the Catawba community,

Please stand so that we can welcome you all.

We also welcome an important group of students

Who assist in not just today's Opening Convocation,

But throughout the academic year

And in particular, the activities surrounding Commencement

In next May.

Beside me is the academic mace of Catawba College,
Something you may have seen in the President's Office
If you visited him.

The origination of the academic mace
dates back to medieval times
when it was first used as a weapon.

Medieval European bishops,
who were forbidden the use of the sword,
were allowed to enter battle with a mace,
often an iron or steel club designed to split armor.

By the 16th century the mace was outdated
as a weapon on the battlefield
but it remained a powerful symbol of authority
and was embraced as a ceremonial object
by colleges and universities.

Traditionally, the Senior Marshal of the college
carries the ceremonial mace.

In early times marshals were associated
with military commands or civil authorities,
think of Field Marshals or Fire Marshals.

Early Academic Marshals used the mace
to protect the president of the college
from rowdy students and angry local citizens.

Here at Catawba College the Senior Marshal
is Dr. Janice Fuller, the senior faculty member

in terms of years of service to the college.

Dr. Fuller normally opens and closes all college convocations but because of recent surgery the next senior faculty member, Dr. Paul Baker, professor of mathematics and computer science, was at the front of today's procession carrying the mace.

Please note however:

Like Dr. Fuller, Dr. Baker takes academic tradition seriously and he will wack you with the mace if you attempt to molest President Lewis.

Then you will have to deal with Dr. Fuller—and nobody wants to deal with Dr. Fuller.

In her duties as Senior Marshal Dr. Fuller is assisted by the Junior Marshals who give directions to the faculty, graduates and others in the procession.

These student Marshals are chosen from the junior class based on academic rank.

They embody the best of Catawba College in both academic achievement and service to our community.

President Lewis will now commission the Day Program Junior Marshals for the 2015-2016 academic year.

As I call your name, please come forward and stand in front of the steps facing the audience.

When all are standing President Lewis will commission you.

Rebecca Aclin
Madeline Auchter
Blake Brewer
Katelyn DeZego
Anna Fields
McKenzie Garrison
Lauren Gaskill

Ak-lin
Auk-ter

Olivia Hedrick
Michael Jones
Dominique Karriker
Reid Lichtenberger
Carrie Loman
Cole Middleton
Declan Stimson
Nathan Wyatt
President Lewis, I present to you
Those members of our Junior Class
to be commissioned as Catawba College Junior Marshals.

President Lewis:

"By the authority vested in me by the trustees of Catawba College I commission you as Junior Marshals, with all the rights and duties of that office. As a symbol of your office I present you with a medallion engraved with the likeness of Hedrick Hall"

- President Lewis Places Medallions around each neck
- Pulliam Hands President Lewis the Medallions
- Dr. Baker hands each new JM a rose.

Dr. Bitzer:

Please join me in congratulating
our 2015-2016 Catawba College Junior Marshal. (applause)

It is also my honor to introduce the officers

For the 2015-16 year of the Student Government Association:

Mr. Justin Burroughs, executive president

Mr. Blake Brewer, vice president

Mr. David Stevenson, secretary

Ms. Caroline Graham, treasurer

Please join me in thanking them for their service.

And now, I ask President Burroughs

to bring greetings to you all,

on behalf of the Student Government Association.

Following him will be Ms. Darlene Ball,

Catawba Class of 1962 and Chair of the Board of Trustees,

Dr. Doug Brown, associate professor of mathematics and chair of the Faculty Senate,

And Mr. Rodney Rymer, chair of the Staff Council.

President Burroughs.

Thank you Dr. Burgess and the Catawba Singers.

As we start this new academic year,

I want to share a brief story
that may ring true to our soon-to-be graduates,
the members of the Class of 2016

But also perhaps to all of us gathered here
at the start of this new year.

We have all heard about the push in college education today:
It's not so much "what will I learn in college?" as it is
"What will I do with my college education?"

Now, I will be dating myself,
But thirty (muffled) years ago this fall,
I started my career as an undergraduate.

And while I thought I knew what I wanted to major in,
English, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do
With that degree on my first day of classes.

Like many folks who heard my answer to the question

“What are you going to major in?”

Their immediate response was

“Oh, so you want to teach?”

Now, I had thought about being a teacher,

but I wasn't truly sure

if that was what I truly wanted to do when I entered ‘the real world.’

So I started classes, and while I loved my English courses

(although, I have to be honest,

taking a 3000-level course on Chaucer as a

second-semester freshmen really gave me pause),

I started working towards my general education requirements.

I took a history course—and thought, hey,

maybe I could double major in English and history?

I really like it.

Then I took a psychology course—this was interesting,
maybe I should do that.

I always had a love for politics,
so I took a political science course—
they only had a minor, but I thought, yea, I should have that.

Then I took an education course on
“Teaching English as a Second Language.”
That really peaked my interest.

There were thoughts about other disciplines,
but in the end,
I graduated with a degree in—yup—English,
And on graduation day, I still no idea
what I wanted to do with it.

But looking back nearly 30 (muffled) years ago,
I do remember what attracted to me
to those different areas—
and while the subject matter was important,
there was something else that really brought me
to consider those different majors.

And it's something that I think, and hope that you,
our returning students, have experienced
and that our new students will discover.

It was the passion of the professors
who taught those classes
And who demonstrated
what kind of possibilities
were out there with a degree from those areas.

So I had my English degree in hand—now what?

Well, moving from the upstate of South Carolina
to the middle of Florida was in my future,
so I started blanketing the greater Orlando area with resumes.

I truly had no idea what I was going to do,
But along came a response from a former editor of
Florida Today, the parent company of the newspaper
USA Today, who was starting a bi-weekly paper
Of his own on Merritt Island.

I interviewed, and became the reporter/
photographer/
Darkroom specialist/gopher,
Everything besides delivering the papers and selling ads.

And for my first story, I sweated blood and tears over it.

I printed it, handed a copy of it to my editor,
Who famously smoked a cigarette that barely clung
To his lips and who wore both suspenders and a belt—
He called it his ‘insurance policy.’

And the comment back was: “You can’t write.”

Devastated, I took his advice and rewrote the story.

And rewrote it, and rewrote it.

Four rewrites later—“you may have some potential.”

I learned that writing was critical,
and that communication would become a valuable lesson
that I needed to constantly practice.

Because, if you think about it, can anyone
name any profession or career where
you don’t have to communicate?

So, after a year working as a reporter
and discovering it wasn’t for me,

I landed a job as a public affairs officer.

Partly because of my experience in newspapers,

I worked for the Dean of Engineering at Clemson University.

Now, engineers are brilliant individuals—

And engineers with Ph.Ds are even more so.

But after one week working with some of them,

I could tell I wasn't so much a public relations officer

As I was a United Nations translator.

Engineers had a terrible habit of simply making up words—

Words that don't exist in Webster's dictionary.

But helping them to communicate with the rest of the world

Was important—it was my job.

And there I was able to work on, and earn, a
Master's degree in history.

It was my first day of sitting in an undergraduate and
Graduate course on the history of Nazi Germany—
Not one of the more lively topics you could study—
but seeing Dr. Don McKale present the beginnings
a story surrounding the horrific events
in a compelling way that made me say
at the end of his lecture—“that's what I want to do.”

Which lead me to pursue my Ph.D. in political science
And the opportunity for me to become a teacher.

I had discovered 'my calling'—my profession, my passion,
something that made me say
“it's not a job, but something I love to do each and every day.”

Now, in a few weeks, we will host a speaker on campus
Who has written a book about finding a calling,
Which he says, and I'm paraphrasing here,
is a "particular life role that demonstrates
a sense of purpose or meaningfulness".

This speaker will be the inaugural event to a new
Program that we are starting this year, called
Catawba to Career, or C2C.

Directed by Mrs. Kim Smith (would you please stand),
the program will help our students
to think about your interest, your sense of values,
And perhaps even your calling or passion
In considering a career or profession.

This new program is the result of two years of thinking about
And considering, what we, as Catawba College, can do
To improve our students' knowledge and experiences.

And working with Robin Perry (would you please stand),
our director of careers services,
along with a great resource—the faculty—

we hope the combination of C2C and Career Services
will provide a foundation for our students
to consider your career passions and opportunities.

But everyone should probably recognize: you may not know what your
passion or calling is at this very moment.

Over my time, I've been a newspaper reporter,
then a public affairs officer,
Then a graduate student, then teacher, and now provost.

That's half of what the Bureau of Labor Statistics
Has found most Americans will have in the number
Of jobs over their lifetime.

But over these five jobs and three degrees,
What I have found is that there are skills that
Are critical to having that progression in my career.

This past spring, a research firm surveyed
both recent college graduates and
employers about different skills
needed in the workforce
and how well prepared today's

college graduates are when they enter the work force.

Between 75 and 85 percent of employers and college students said these skills were most important for the workplace:

- Oral Communication
- Working with others in teams
- Written Communication
- Critical & Analytical Thinking
- Ethical Judgment and Decisionmaking
- Applying Knowledge and Skills to the Real World

Then the survey asked both college students and employers, 'how well prepared are college graduates with these skills?'

Sixty-five percent of college graduates said they were well prepared in written communication.

Do you know what percentage of employers said

That college graduates were well prepared

In written communication?

Only 27 percent.

Sixty-six percent of college graduates said

they were well prepared in critical and analytical thinking.

Only 26 percent of employers said college graduates were well prepared.

Sixty-two percent of college graduates said they were well prepared in oral communication.

Only 28 percent of employers said the same.

So both college students and employers
Recognize that these skills are critical in the workplace
But they differed widely when saying how well prepared
College graduates are.

In a recent article in Forbes magazine,
One CEO of a \$2.8 billion start-up tech company said:

“I learned how to write really clearly.
I learned how to follow an argument all the way down,
which is invaluable in running meetings.

And when I studied the history of science,
I learned about the ways that everyone believes
something is true—like the old notion
of some kind of ether in the air
propagating gravitational forces—until they realized
that it wasn't true.”

The CEO's major in undergraduate studies? Philosophy.

So when you are in your classes this year, think about
What are your goals?

Obviously, it's to get a job.

But then, think about what employers want from today college graduates?

Written communicators.

Oral communicators.

Critical thinkers.

Analytical problem solvers.

Those who can work on teams together.

And just as importantly: those who are ethical in their judgments and decisions.

62 percent of college graduates said they were well prepared to make ethical judgments and decisions.

Only 30 percent of employers said college graduates were well prepared in ethical judgment and decision making.

In a few minutes, we will all recite the Catawba College Honor Code.

This is an important event in the life a college community.

Last week, nearly all of the faculty gathered with a guest speaker

Who talked about the value of academic integrity

And how colleges can promote that shared sense of honor
In ourselves, in each other, and in our community.

The discussion that followed that workshop
Was stimulating and challenging.

As provost, I'm asking that the Catawba community—
students, staff, and faculty—consider our Honor Code,
especially in light of the four words
found on our college seal.

Scholarship.

Character.

Culture.

Service.

We often think of the Honor Code as being in the classroom,
In which scholarship is done
in an ethical and principled manner,
By not cheating, plagiarizing, or
committing academic dishonesty.

Now, the temptations are always there—
Cramming for that exam,
checking out a website about a paper topic
the night before the paper is due,
Filling a smart phone with some ‘reminders.’

But let me share with you a story about
A recent visit I experienced.

A few weeks ago, a gentleman, about my age,
Stopped in College's Welcome Center, and
Said that he wanted to speak to the president,
and only the president.

Well, whenever the president is away from campus,
As he was that day,
The question or issue comes to me.

What was intriguing was that the gentleman
Didn't want to say what the issue was about
to anyone, other than the president or myself.

So I walked down to the Welcome Center
And invited him into a private office.

And there, with a rather heavy heart,
He said that he was a graduate of Catawba College.

And that during his time at Catawba,

he had broken the Honor Code.

That he had felt the burden,
And that he had recently
rediscovered his faith,
And that he needed to let someone know about his cheating.

We chatted for a few minutes—I promised him
That we couldn't take back his degree—but we talked,
Actually, he did most of the talking,
About the need for honesty and integrity.

And he said,
while he remembered some wonderful faculty,
And some truly challenging experiences,
it was these instances of academic dishonesty
that had mired his memory.
And that he needed to let someone know.

After a few more minutes of chatting about his work
and his life, I thanked him for his honesty
and his willingness to share his burden.

And as I watched him walk out of the front door of
The Admin Building, I could tell—his walk was
A little firmer.

His head was a little higher, than when I first met him
Not 15 minutes before.

Our Honor Code should speak directly to the kind of
character we all want to present,
to each other and to our greater community.
Of a sense of responsibility to ourselves,
to each other and our institution.

Our Honor Code should underpin the campus' culture
in promoting the values of intellectual and practical integrity,
Of promoting the common good for all.

And in doing so, we promote the value of service,
That we ultimately hope will allow you,
Our future Catawba graduates
to achieve your highest potential.

After classes resume, I'll be inviting students,
faculty and staff to come together to have a conversation
about our Honor Code and the principles behind it.

Does it satisfy our four key values for the campus community?
If it is as good
as is,
how can the community
better promote its ideals and principles?

How does the structure of ensuring ethical behavior
and judgment coincide with the Honor Code and its practice?

As we collectively read the Honor Code,
I would ask that each of you
think about this statement,
what it means to you,
and if it truly reflects
the values
of scholarship, character, culture, and service.

If you would like to be a part of this conversation
in reviewing the Honor Code,
please send me an e-mail:
Provost @ Catawba.edu
Or even a tweet: @CatawbaProvost

Now after President Burroughs leads us
in reciting the Honor Code,
We will ask all of the new students—
first year and transfer students—
to please come forward down the center aisle.

The Junior Marshals will come to each of the pews
to escort you to President Lewis,
who will shake your hand,
welcoming you to Catawba
and signifying your accepting a pledge
of responsibility
for upholding the Honor Code.

In four years, we hope that you will again
shake the President's hand,
as you receive your diploma.

You'll then split off to either side of the chapel,
where you will sign the sheets
as a member of the Class of 2019
and receive a Catawba Pin.

Please note that there are 4 tables on each side;
You can proceed to the one that is least occupied
for your signature and receiving your pin.

For those who are able to stand,
I invite you to do so and
I ask President Burroughs
To come and lead us in reciting the Honor Code.

President Burroughs.

AFTER THE RECITING

You may be seated.

During this part of the ceremony, Dr. Phillip Burgess,
assistant professor of music and college organist,
will provide some music.

Will the Junior Marshals please escort the new students
Beginning with the front pew
To President Lewis and to the tables for signing?

AFTER THE SIGNING

Now, we will sing the Alma Mater, found in your program.
Please remain standing for the benediction,
Led by Dr. Clapp.

Afterwards, we would ask the audience to be seated
While the faculty recess, and then Dr. Pulliam,
The College Marshal, will speak to you and dismiss you.

A few notes on tonight's activities:

Due to the pending inclement weather,
The picnic for the community has been moved
To inside the Cannon Student Center,
Along with the organization and club fair.

The drawing for door prizes will be held
after the organization fair.

And tonight's movie of "Avengers: Age of Ultron"
Will be in Keppel Auditorium, starting at 8:30.

Thank you for joining us for this Opening Convocation
And we look forward to seeing you
at the Cannon Student Center
immediately following this ceremony.

For those who are able, please rise.

ALMA MATER

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL