

Julie Ramsey - Dean of Students

Good afternoon and Welcome. Welcome faculty and staff, returning students, and most importantly today, a warm welcome to new students and your families-mothers, fathers, siblings, cousins, grandparents and friends-all those who are here to mark and celebrate this very important day. We know that this is a big day for all of you, and we hope to make it as enjoyable and memorable. Don't you love those folks who showed up at your car door the moment you pulled up to the curb to help you unload? Let's give those folks a big round of applause!

My name is Julie Ramsey. I am the Vice President for College life and Dean of Students.

Purpose of our ceremony today:

- To give you a formal induction into the college, with a bit of the pomp and circumstance that is warranted by this occasion. Creates a shared experience for the entire community-faculty, administrators, parents and families, incoming students.
- Introduce you to some of the traditions of the college. Class flag, flying over the Cupola, is your class flag, the class of 2014. It flies today and it will fly again in this very spot when you are all assembled here in May of 2014 for your graduation. When you descend again on these stairs to accept your diploma from Gettysburg.
- Another purpose of our gathering here today is to give you a deeper insight into our goals and aspirations for you -for these next four years. We want you to understand what it means to be here, to be part of this community, to understand that you are here for a purpose that goes beyond your narrow self interest.
- One of the values that Gettysburg is best known for and is held particularly dear is the value of service. One of the college documents that reflects on the value of service framed it this way:

We recognize the privilege of our circumstance and embrace the obligation it conveys to improve the lives of others.

I will read that again:

2 parts to that statement: First part: "we recognize the privilege of our circumstance:" Keep in mind, you were one of nearly 6,000 students who wanted to attend Gettysburg College. Look around you. Beautiful buildings and grounds, a palpable sense of history, excellent academic facilities, highly able and dedicated faculty, and a class of bright and talented students to enjoy and learn from. It takes a lot of people-from President Riggs to your faculty advisor, to the groundskeepers and dining hall staff, from the nurses in the health center, to the librarians and coaches, it takes hundreds of people with a commitment to excellence to bring all these elements together for you. You stand on the shoulders of generations going back to 1832-alumni and friends who donated their wealth to provide scholarships, buildings, prizes to enable you to enjoy the benefits of this rigorous education in this historic place.

Think about your parents and families who helped to make this enrollment possible for you.

So when you walk from class back to your dorm, when you walk to Servo in the morning, take a moment to remember that you have been given a wonderful opportunity and benefit to study and learn here. Your being here is a privilege and that privilege means something.

Which brings us to the second part of the quotation I read earlier: we embrace the obligation it conveys to improve the lives of others.

The word I like here is **embrace**-which has all the implications of accepting and welcoming something-of holding it close to you, gripping it. So we are to embrace our obligation to improve the lives of others.

So who are these others whose lives are bound up with yours? Often when we hear phrases about improving the lives of others, we think of people whose lives are devastated by poverty, malnutrition, war and disease. These ills of the world are very real-and you will have the means to address some of these issues while you are in college. But the folks I am asking you to embrace are the ones sitting all around you-your roommate and the kids living next door, your fellow students in class, those around you in the dining hall and the library. At Gettysburg, you have an obligation to think about your fellow students and how your decisions impact them. This is not a place where every woman is an island; where every man is for himself. This is a community, where our lives are bound up with one another's. So while GB is a place that has been constructed for you, it is also a place that you construct. Every day, you make this place what it is - you set the tone for the residence halls, the classes, the interactions in the open spaces.

- responsibility to the larger Gettysburg community (Thursday will provide opportunity to connect with community through GIV Day and the FY Walk)