Welcome and greetings to our faculty, staff, honored guests and most importantly the 2017 class! We are very glad you are here and we look forward to getting to know each one of you over the next few years.

We gather here today to celebrate the first event of your academic experience at this college and to welcome you into the Keene State College family. This Convocation is a celebration and an opportunity to extend to you a warm welcome into this community of learning.

Our second purpose is to celebrate and honor the traditions of academic life on which this college rests. You can see a visible expression of those traditions in the caps and gowns that the faculty wear. They remind us that we at Keene State College are linked to a long tradition of university life that reaches back almost a thousand years.

And beyond that we are connected to traditions of inquiry, of the search for truth and meaning, and the preparation for life and work that are at the very core of what it means to be human. This morning’s ceremony is intended to affirm those traditions.

Through this ritual, we seek to convey something of the transforming power, the serious moral purpose, and the intellectual possibilities of a college education. We’d like you to know at the beginning what we believe at Keene State College.

We believe that your encounter with college level learning will challenge and change your understanding of the world and of yourself. You will become a different person. Let that happen, as we believe that this learning, even if it is painful, is preferable to a comfortable ignorance. And we believe that this learning will contribute not only to your personal enrichment and professional
success, but also to the betterment, the humanizing, and maybe even to the saving of the fragile and vulnerable world, which we all share.

In all of this, your models will be the faculty and staff who will work with you over the next several years. We hope you will find something to engage in, in ways you never thought possible, that you will test yourself, that you will ask much of us, and that we will have a very interesting journey together.

Serious purpose and exciting possibilities: that's what we seek to convey in today's New Student Convocation. Serious purpose and exciting possibilities.

College learning explores the external world of nature, of human society, and of professional training. But serious learning of any kind is also intensely personal. It is a risk-taking process. It is a matter of finding your own voice and expressing it creatively. This, in part, is the world of the arts—represented at Keene by music, dance, theatre, painting, sculpture, and more.

You’ll find creative expression in the laboratories and classrooms and internship experiences of the sciences and social sciences. You’ll take risks in architecture, education, product design.

Our mission, “To prepare students to think critically and creatively, to engage in active citizenship, and to pursue meaningful work” will be what guides your experience at Keene State College. Each and every member of this community is invested in your success.

On August 28th we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s I have a dream speech. And so I think it fitting to share a quote – “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individual concerns, to the broader concerns of all humanity.” College is a place to explore the broader concerns and now is the time to commence that journey.

Shortly you will hear from our chief academic officer, Provost Melinda Treadwell. Listen carefully as she articulates what you should expect from us and importantly what we expect from you. College is not a bleacher sport. Nor is it merely the consumption of information. Rather, it is a place for transformation, exploration
and growth. You have one thousand four hundred days at Keene State College (plus an intersession or two). Don’t waste them. You will never be as free as you are right now to boldly embrace the pursuit of knowledge.

Again, my heartfelt welcome to the class of 2017. I look forward to our journey together as we start our first year at Keene State College.