

New Student Convocation
August 12, 2011

Welcome to our family!!! And welcome to an incredibly proud location—Spivey Hall-- not only at Clayton State, but nationally known. The following comes from a recent Novel by Haywood Smith, Waking Up Dixie. “It wasn’t enough that their small stone church had to have a new pipe organ, though the old one sounded fine to Elizabeth. Augusta insisted they have one to rival Spivey Hall’s.” Not likely I say!!

Some would say what you have experienced over a period of the last several months constitutes the beginning of Freshmen adjustment. Freshmen adjustment in this presentation is not a reference to Kanye West’s three mix tapes first released in March, 2005—entitled Freshmen Adjustment—parts one, two and the three.

Freshmen adjustment refers to making the transition from 12th to 13th grade. I have been watching students, including myself, go through that transition since before you were born—and in some instances, before your parents were born, as frightening as that admission is to me. There have been any number of changes in that process over time—to quote the great American Philosopher Yogi Berra, “the future is not like it used to be.” And some of those changes I will mention a bit later. But in a lot of ways, there are remarkable constants. And I want to share with you my perceptions of some of those constants, and changes, in three parts.

First, this day is the first step toward your graduation. That’s the goal—and it is a worthy goal.

Second, actions you take and attitudes you have have consequences.

Third, we will help you help yourself—because you are part of the family.

First, this is your first step toward graduation, and a worthy goal that is. George Kuh of the University of Indiana and perhaps one of America's experts on the undergraduate experience noted recently the economic value of a university degree. (2006) "Earning a baccalaureate degree is the most important rung in the economic ladder, as college graduates on average earn almost a million dollars more over the course of their working lives than those with only a high school diploma." And even in this horrible employment market, the difference that a university degree can make in employment chances are incredible: In July of 2011, unemployment rates for those with less than a high school diploma was 15%; 9.3% with a high school diploma; 8.3% with some college or an associate's degree; 4.3% with a bachelor's degree or higher. The longer you play, the more likely you'll be paid. Clearly there is no guarantee for success—but there is great reason to believe that your chances for economic success double in the long run with the completion of a college degree.

But wait, there's more. The data also indicates that, controlling for other factors, having more education leads to better health decisions, and lower health expenditures. Both for the college graduate and his or her family, having a college degree reduces the chances of being on public assistance, of interacting badly with the prison system, and increases the chances for home ownership, and increases the chances of having one's children succeed in school and completing a university degree.

So, being accepted to university and beginning your adventure to higher education should be a source of pride—but only some pride. For us, we want you to remember that it is but a start to graduation—a journey where there will be help along the way. As the late motivational writer Jim Rohn penned: “If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse.”

And that leads to our second theme: actions you take and attitudes you have have consequences. Again quoting Jim Rohn: “Don't wish it were easier; wish you were better. Don't wish for fewer problems; wish for more skills. Don't wish for fewer challenges; wish for more wisdom... “ We would not have accepted you to Clayton State University if we did not believe you were capable of university level work. Nonetheless, one consistent theme I have heard for decades is “this is much harder than higher school.” But usually that discovery is made after a student has fallen behind early in the semester, and discovered that it is much more difficult to catch up at the university than it was back in high school. And we do not want you to find yourself behind!! So in order to avoid falling behind, I ask you to do a few things before classes start Monday, and after you get materials with each class next week.

If you have not already done so, get a day or weekly or monthly planner—whatever you think is comfortable—or, using the software you receive as a part of your technology fee, use outlook calendar. Begin by noting each of your classes for the entire semester. And if you know you must work, put your working schedule in the calendar. As you receive a new syllabus for each of your courses the first week, record the dates for assignments, for quizzes, for tests, and for other activities scheduled. Add to that a schedule of exercise and sleep—not just because we care for your health, but because we care for your learning

success. John Medina in the book **Brainrules** writes about exercise: No matter how it was measured, the answer was consistently yes: a lifetime of exercise can result in a sometimes astonishing elevation in cognitive performance, compared to those who are sedentary.” Medina cites an opposite effect for sleep loss and academic performance: “Take an A student used to scoring in the top 10 percent of virtually anything she does. One study showed that if she gets just under 7 hours of sleep on weekdays and about 40 minutes more on weekends, she will begin to score in the bottom 9% of non-sleep deprived individuals.” And like so many of us, things we don’t schedule we are not likely to do. But with a schedule, and often a public proclamation to friends that we have a schedule, we are more likely to adhere to it, and thus to succeed first semester—and we know from considerable experience that success in the first semester dramatically increases the chances of success later. And your attitude for success, and your actions to support them, as I said, will have positive consequences for your drive to graduation. And this leads to my third and final observation: we will help you help yourself—because you are part of the family.

As you begin this semester, let me urge you to seek out faculty and staff early in the Semester to support your efforts to learn. Take advantage of the new study program developed as a part of our new first year experience—and that means learning to study without distraction, or pretending to be able to multitask. Ask for assistance when you perceive that you might benefit from such a request, rather than waiting. Stay current with your assignments. Ask advice from offices such as the Center for Academic Success <http://adminservices.clayton.edu/cas/> or perhaps the office of Career

Services <http://adminsServices.clayton.edu/career/> early. Find your advisor as early as possible in the semester, and seek him or her out. Your advisor and you working together can help you avoid lapses that will strain your ability to graduate. And most importantly, seek out your faculty instructors early in this semester—their dedication to you and their disciplines can be most fully appreciated by engaging them early in your pursuit of learning all you can in their courses.

The university spent the better part of a year updating our strategic plan. And from that we offer pledges to you that emerge from our university's strategic plan—active learning opportunities at one or more times in your university career here; degree programs that will be constantly reviewed to assure a relationship between skills and knowledge you acquire, and changing needs in the broader job market; directed and significant support services that will help you to take advantage of current opportunities and to plan for future ones. The diversity of people with whom you will interact here will be greater than most any other place you can find—other than the job market you will enter upon graduation. And that diversity of race, gender, social class, age, previous experiences, and national origin will all come together in ways that will inform your learning and prepare you for a world that you will discover to be just as diverse.

<http://www.clayton.edu/president/strategicplanfinal062211.pdf>

Student learning begins with you!!!

SO

Manage your time....

Don't fall behind....

Visit the Career Center....

Identify a mentor.....

Get connected and stay connected. Yesterday as I was coming here to Spivey Hall, I passed a student from last year who indicated he was starting an internship in Orlando next week and that he would see me in January. Here in the Hall I saw our pianist, who survived my first year experience course here 2 years ago. Like them you should get to know your professors, even if you are stuck with me.

Savvy students align themselves with others. Form study groups, participate in student organizations and recognize the value of your peers. Like-minded students are resources for one another. Tutors and peer mentors in your freshmen year may be networking pathways for you as a senior or a graduate. Go to class—As Woody Allen noted years ago, 80% of life is showing up. And I always found that if I went to class, it would save hours of time trying to determine what the professor wanted me to know.

Professor Seymour Papert, Founding Professor of the MIT Media Lab, could have speaking of Clayton State University when he described what education can achieve: 'We imagine a school in which students and teachers excitedly and joyfully stretch themselves to their limits in pursuit of projects built on their vision...'

Perhaps the most important thing a mentor ever said to me was the following: “we expect great things from you, Young Hynes.” And we expect great things from you—but with those expectations we give you the support to meet them. And so welcome to the first day on your road to a university degree, and to Clayton State University.

