Welcome remarks from Dean/Director William L. MacDonald

Students, welcome to Ohio State and to the Newark campus. At Convocation, we bring together as many members of the campus community as we can to welcome first-year students to Ohio State and to celebrate the start of the academic year. Some members of our community are up here on the platform with me, some are in the seats over here to my right, and I am excited to introduce them to you. Please stand when I call your name or group. Kathy Lloyd, Chair of the Ohio State Newark Board, members of the Ohio State Newark faculty, and members of the Ohio State Newark staff. Please join me in greeting them with a round of applause.

Ok students, I have an assignment for you. Please pull out your cell phone if you have it. If you don’t have it, don’t worry. You will easily be able to complete this assignment after our ceremony. All of you got to this point in your life with help from someone, and you are indebted to them for that help. I want to help you thank them. Open a text to someone who helped you. They might be a parent, a foster parent, a stepparent, a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle, a sibling, a teacher, or a friend. For some of you, your helper may be local. For others of you, your helpers may be a few counties away, or even a country away. I recommend you type something like this (but don’t hit send yet. I will tell you when to do that.) Ok. Here goes: “Starting my degree at Ohio State is a huge moment in my life.” “I am grateful to you for helping me reach this moment, and I promise to make the most of it.” Do not hit “Send” until you do one other thing. Add yourself as a recipient. Now, hit “Send.”
This afternoon, I want to give you advice on making the most of this moment in your life. Keep your cell phones on so you can take a few notes. I’ll tell you when I have something for you to write down, but first let me offer a few thoughts for you to ponder as I talk. Don’t worry about writing anything down just yet.

I have no doubt that you have heard that Ohio State is a huge place. It is. With six campuses, extension offices throughout the state, and gateway sites around the world, Ohio State is magnificently massive. That enormous space attracts and accommodates an incredibly diverse student population. You represent over 60 of Ohio’s 88 counties. Some of you were born outside the United States or have parents who immigrated to the U.S. In fact, some of you may be celebrating a holiday. Eid al-Adha, today. If you are, then eid Mubarak.

Every one of you contributes to the diversity of our student population, not only here at the Newark campus, but at Ohio State, overall. That sea of diversity in which you are swimming will present amazing opportunities for you to learn from each other. You are going to form life-long relationships that cross ethnic, racial, religious, gender, political, and all sorts of other cultural categories. We are all different from one another, but we are all part of one Ohio State family.

Speaking of family, I’d like you to imagine that you are at a family event where many family members, some of whom you might never have met, are present. It might be a wedding, a family reunion, or a graduation party. You could grab some food and sit with the people you know, but
your experience will be so much richer if you introduce yourself to family members you don’t know and try to learn a little bit about them.

Those events are always over before you know it, so my advice to you is to take the initiative to learn more about your Ohio State family before the moment slips away. Mix and mingle and get to know your family. Your Ohio State family is big; it’s diverse; and it’s friendly. You will build an amazing network of relationships that will benefit you down the road. Participate in the family traditions. Ok, take some notes on your cell phone. Here are some traditions. Make it a point this week to investigate them:

- Student organizations
- Education Abroad
- STEP
- Honors
- ROTC – Army ROTC here at the Newark campus
- Stone Lab – take a summer course; watch for information this week about an overnight field trip in October
- Newark Earthworks Center
- The Works
- Service Learning
- Research experiences – visit with faculty members

Oh, there’s one more I wanted to mention: O – H!
Get up out of your chair at the table and move around. Don’t sit by and watch what others are doing. Join them. Ohio State offers you enormous opportunities to grow, but you have to find a lever and pull it. Don’t go to Cedar Point or Kings Island or Disneyworld and just walk around. Hop on a ride. If it’s the bumper cars, put your foot on the pedal. If it’s the cups and saucers, grab the wheel and give it a spin. If there’s a show, get a ticket and sing along. Invest yourself in your classes and in your extracurricular activities. You will not be disappointed.

Students, your moment at Ohio State has begun. You are about to begin an incredible journey that will be over before you know it. I hope that when you reach your destination, you look back at your moment at Ohio State with tremendous pleasure. Have a great year!