Students, welcome to The Ohio State University and to the Newark campus. At Convocation, members of the campus community come together to welcome you 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. Marcia Downes, Alexa Robinson-O’Neill, and Tara Houdeshell, members 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.

The land on which we are gathering together today has long served as a site of meeting and exchange for indigenous peoples, including those in historical times known as the Shawnee, Miami, Wyandotte, Delaware, and the People of the Fort Ancient, Hopewell, and Adena cultures also known as the earthworks builders, as well as other tribal nations of the region. We honor and respect the diverse, indigenous peoples connected to this land in which we gather.

As we gather in this land today to celebrate the start of the academic year, we are also celebrating Ohio State’s sesquicentennial. Over those 150 years, Ohio State has developed many traditions that encompass all of its campuses. Those traditions help define the university’s culture, but a university’s culture is always fluid. Activities emerge, gain popularity, and may
become so established that it’s hard to imagine they might someday disappear. Consider the phrase, OH-IO! Some gain popularity but evolve. Just go look at old pictures of Brutus Buckeye. Others eventually disappear altogether. Consider what happens when a building is demolished. All traditions have a beginning, and the fluidity of Ohio State’s culture means that a new tradition can emerge at any moment, and its potential to do so resides in you.

Now I want you to think about something. Believe it or not, all first-year students gathering at this regional campus this fall represent about 50% of the campus’s population. The size of your subpopulation gives you great influence. My advice to you today is to own the culture. It belongs to you, and it’s yours to shape. Leave your mark.

Every one of you contributes to the diversity of our student population, not only here at the Newark campus, but at Ohio State, overall. The 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.

And that’s a big family. With six campuses, extension offices throughout the state, and gateway sites in Brazil, China, and India, and alumni all 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, and some of you were born outside the United States or have parents who immigrated to the U.S.
So how do you leave your mark in such a huge family? You can start by mixing and mingling and getting to know your family. It’s friendly. Try these things:

- 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
- Visit the Newark Earthworks and ask about getting involved in the Newark Earthworks Center
- Visit The Works and ask about getting involved there – you’ve got to visit the SciDome
- Service Learning
- Research experiences – visit with faculty members
- Pelotonia – Join the campus peloton and help Ohio State end cancer
- University Chorus

Don’t sit by and watch. Join in. Take the lead. Ohio State offers you enormous opportunities to grow, but you have to engage the ignition. Students, your moment at Ohio State has begun. You are on an incredible journey, and I hope that when you reach your destination, when you receive your diploma, you will look back at your seasons at Ohio State with tremendous pleasure. Have a great year!