



Connecticut College
President's Remarks at Freshmen Assembly
President Leo I. Higdon, Jr.
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Members of the Class of 2010, transfer students, family members and friends: good afternoon and welcome to Connecticut College. I hope this assembly presents a desired break from moving and unpacking. If it makes you feel any better, my wife and I just went through the same experience ourselves!

I am sure today the reality of this significant transition in your life is finally sinking in and you are excited to find out what lies ahead for you.

You are an exceptional group of men and women. Your admissions materials reveal outstanding accomplishments, academically and personally, and you represent one of the College's strongest classes. You have set the bar high for yourselves and much will be expected of you.

Your academic strength proves your ability to be independent and self-reliant learners, essential skills. But today, as you enter a new learning community, I want to emphasize another skill that is important: building connections.

Creating, developing and nurturing connections will enrich your experience here and will be an invaluable skill you take with you later in life.

Making connections is at the heart of the College's extraordinarily rich academic program. The goal of a liberal arts education is to constantly challenge you to question and analyze, to think critically and ethically, and to create coherence and derive meaning. You are required to take classes in a variety of disciplines not only to develop a broad foundation of knowledge, but also to encourage you to think across disciplines. Here you learn not what to think but how to think — how to recognize abstract relationships and see relationships where others do not.

Helping you build these connections will be your professors. Knowledgeable, caring, first-rate faculty will mentor you. They will share their own perspectives on their fields, learning, and life in general. Take care to build rapport with your professors and create collaborations that will enhance your academic experience. Look also to the College's outstanding staff, who will provide guidance and create opportunities for you.

Connect with your peers. You will play important roles in each other's education. As you look around this auditorium, you see the people who will offer their own ideas and insights on a broad

range of subjects, who will force you to reevaluate your thinking, who will be your partners in making the most of your four years here and some who will become your life-long friends.

Seek opportunities, structured or informal, to learn from your fellow students and to understand their perspectives. Hopefully, you will come to value their opinions. You each join the College community with a unique history — a collection of experiences and values that reflect who you are. Approach others with openness to that history and be willing to share your own. Connect with activities outside the classroom. Take what you discover and connect it to your own interests. On the playing fields, in the practice rooms, in the studio, at student government sessions or in whatever passion you pursue, look for connections to the learning that engages you.

Connect to the world off campus. The College offers numerous programs that expand your learning through research, internships, study abroad or volunteer service. I also encourage you to connect to the community surrounding the campus. New London has a rich history, an active artistic community and a wealth of opportunities to get involved as a volunteer. Giving of your time and talent is a rewarding and enlightening experience that connects you to new knowledge while you benefit others.

Finally, there will be opportunities while you are here to connect with College alumni. You are now part of a community with over 24,000 members. Graduates who participate in our alumni network are a source of knowledge and professional and personal support.

The connections you make will sustain you through your time at Conn and after you graduate. You will gain different perspectives and an ability to understand and communicate that will benefit you in all your endeavors.

You will be shaped, changed and, more importantly, enriched by the connections you make.

Again, a warm welcome to you all. I look forward to meeting you around campus.