



2018

New Student Convocation

Bob Ladd

Illinois Wesleyan University

Transitions:

Welcome class of 2022. I'm so excited for you all to begin this journey and am sure in the next few days and weeks, you'll be amazed at how many life-long friends and wonderful memories you make.

Three years ago, I sat where you are now for my first convocation, and so I tried to think back to what I remembered from that, because I figured I should try to say something that sticks with you

only really remembered 3 things:

1. the student senate president, got up to give this speech and just had an absolutely horrible opening joke. It didn't really make sense and no one laughed. So I decided to not do that and if you completely forget me because of that, that's ok.
2. I also remembered singing the alma mater. At the time, I thought that was also our fight song and I was concerned because it just didn't seem to have the right vibe to cheer on our sports teams. Don't worry, we have a fight song that is not traditionally played by an organ with one vocalist. I have sung the alma mater at basketball games and it worked to make the other team miss their free throw, but I think that's about the extent of it's reach into athletics.
3. The final thing I remember was something the provost said. The theme my year was "divided nations" and he spoke on how universities, especially ones centered on the liberal arts, have always been a place where divisive issues can be discussed and views challenged in respectful, but transformative ways. He spoke of how Wesleyan strives to be a place where diametrically opposite people can sit down and learn from each other civilly, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. That stood out to me then because it was the first time I saw how different the culture here is. With this year's theme of "changing climates", I challenge each of you to strive for these kinds of interactions. You will disagree with many people here, on many different topics, but that disagreement is ok, as long as it is accompanied by respect, and a desire to understand the views of another. Each one of you has the power to shift our campus culture and I hope you strive to value others in all you do. That campus atmosphere and attitude, was the reason I knew I was home. I hope you find that too.

I look forward to being a part of our community together. Thank you.