

May 29, 2020

LETTER TO NEW STUDENTS

Over the past few weeks in my conversations with former colleagues who currently serve as presidents of small colleges, their concern for fall enrollment is in the forefront. There are predictions everywhere that enrollment might be down as much as 20% from original projections. Articles frequently focus on the growing intentions of prospective new students to defer their admission, take a gap year or just not attend due to changes in family finances.

As I share my ideas with colleagues, I have been thinking about what I would do if I was still a president. What follows is my draft of a letter to prospective new students, accepted and deposited. I would send it out now in hopes that it would affirm their decision to attend our institution this Fall. I would address it personally by name, and I would take the time to personally sign every letter and add a brief hand-written note at the bottom as simple as “Congratulations, (NAME)” or “(NAME), see you in a few weeks.”

If you like this letter, it is yours to use courtesy of Hyatt-Fennell. You can use all of it or part of it. No attribution is necessary. Or better yet, it might help you to write your own letter. But I would definitely send it out now. This is a confusing time for these young men and women. You can help them. That’s your responsibility, too.

Dear (Insert First Name):

Congratulations on your decision to enroll this Fall at (Name of Institution). Welcome to the Class of 2024! We are looking forward to seeing you in a few weeks.

The next few years will be the most exciting and worthwhile of your life. I can’t tell you who your commencement speaker will be. I can’t guarantee that the sun will be shining on that day in May, 2024. But I know that when you walk across our stage to receive the degree you have earned, I will be there to congratulate you and hand you your diploma.

Keep in mind the reasons why (college name) selected you to be a member of our community of scholars and learners. Many people wanted to be here, but we chose you. We believe that you are capable academically, ethically, socially, spiritually and emotionally. We are convinced that (name of college) is the “best fit” for you in terms of your values, goals and needs.

You should also think about why you decided to attend (name of college). I hope it’s because you know that we will provide you with the following:

- *A strong value system rooted in our (identify) tradition;*
- *A “world class” faculty - teachers and scholars of distinction;*
- *A commitment to quality liberal education and career preparation;*
- *A wide range of curricular and co-curricular resources and opportunities;*
- *Staff and administration committed to every student’s success;*
- *A community atmosphere that encourages and supports students within the classroom and throughout each student’s educational experience;*
- *You are excited about these next four years of your life ... anxious to be a member of this community of scholars and learners, friends and colleagues.*

Finally, let me make you two promises:

First, I promise that you will be successful at (name of college) ... IF ...

- *You focus on your academics and set the right priorities.*
- *Your #1 priority is to earn your degree, it will happen and you will have a great deal of fun along the way!*

Second, I promise that we will do everything possible to help you.

- *We will work hard every day to make your experience at (name of college) better.*
- *You are one of the most important persons at (name of the college).*
- *My door is always open.*

Campus life may be delayed or different, but it will return soon. Whether you will be the first in your family to attend college, you are a legacy at this college, or you are continuing the family tradition of obtaining a college degree, thank you for choosing to attend (name of college).

Enjoy your summer. Stay safe!

Best wishes,

(Personal signature)

(Name)

President

Note: This letter can be tweaked if you have a number of transfer students.

Good luck and best wishes for a successful 2020-21 academic year!

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