

Remarks for Convocation 2009

- 1) It is my honor and my pleasure to call together the faculty and students of Sweet Briar College to inaugurate the College's 10Xth academic year. I ask the Reverend Mr. Adam White to open our ceremony with a benediction.
- 2) Thank you, Reverend White. Now I call upon Dr. David Breneman, Newton and Rita Meyers Professor in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia and a Director of Sweet Briar College, to bring greetings on behalf of the Board of Directors.
- 3) We are brought together here by our shared vocation and mission – but that is not nearly as dry or theoretical as it sounds. Here at Sweet Briar, scholarship, teaching, and study are animated by the joy of discovery and love of the life of the mind. And we know that that joy and that love are enriched when shared, which is why our academic community – all of us, gathered here and now – is so vitally important. Today, we welcome new faculty and new students to that community. They have honored Sweet Briar by joining us. They bring rich talents, fresh energy, new perspectives, and wide ranging interests to the campus. Not only will they do great things here individually, but they will help each other to do great things! On behalf of the college, I thank all new members of the community for choosing to join us in this wonderful place for living and learning among friends.
- 4) It is now my privilege to introduce the new members of the faculty.
- 5) Call on Dean Green to award student prizes.
- 6) (Charge for the academic year.) Thank you, Dean Green. It is customary, at this point in Convocation, for the President to deliver a charge to the campus. I do so today, for the first time, with gratitude. For I am new here myself, and I can imagine no greater good fortune than the opportunity to serve this wonderful College. Thank you all for entrusting me with the responsibilities of the office of president. I will do my best to fulfill the charge of my office every day that I serve. We open this academic year in a time of uncertainty. Our nation, and our world, are experiencing economic turmoil. Circumstances beyond our control exert significant pressure on Sweet Briar, as on all institutions of higher education: endowments are not what they were, philanthropy is constrained, and families are struggling more than ever to afford the educations they aspire to give their children. Although buffeted by these forces, Sweet Briar stands on a firm foundation. The present is certainly challenging but the future remains bright. My charge to the College in this year of continued economic uncertainty is simply this: remember why we do what we do. Celebrate the joy of learning and the love of the life of the mind. Even when there is little gold in our coffers, like Chaucer's Clerk let us gladly learn and gladly teach.
- 7) I now call upon the Reverend Mr. White for a benediction.