

EXEMPLARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND COLLABORATION

Remarks for Final Convocation
April 24, 2025

We gather today to recognize and honor faculty colleagues, seniors, and underclassmen who have distinguished themselves through their academic achievements and contributions to our College. Your fellow students, faculty and staff colleagues, parents and relatives who are joining us, and I congratulate you on your accomplishments, and we thank you for the ways you have modeled excellence. We have counted on you seniors, and we will continue to count on you freshmen, sophomores, and juniors who are also receiving awards today, to be exemplars for your peers, to model the life of the mind and the intellectual vitality that characterize an atmosphere of sound learning.

During a conversation last year with one of our current juniors, he commented that he didn't care for group projects—that he preferred to do projects himself because he thought he was more capable than his peers. Seeing him this year, it seems he's come to understand that, while he may have a higher task orientation than some of his peers, he doesn't have a monopoly on smarts or talent, and that nearly all endeavors can be enhanced through collaboration. It's worth repeating that “college” and “colleague” have the same root, which means “to partner.”

True, much learning is solitary work. Reading, contemplating, synthesizing, writing—are solitary activities, but today is an appropriate occasion to note that we have colleges because learning is enhanced by effective teaching, discussion, feedback, mentoring, and encouragement. The Hampden-Sydney educational program emphasizes these activities, and does them better than most. And, these features of our educational program are also characteristics of an atmosphere of sound learning.

So, yes, we are proud of your accomplishments, and I trust your experiences here at Hampden-Sydney are giving you a sense of the vastness of your talents, creativity, and potential. But we also want to acknowledge and commend you for the many ways you have partnered with colleagues, professors, mentors, and your fellow students. Not only have they helped you earn the recognition you are receiving today, but much of your future success and your leadership will be measured by how well you collaborate and unleash the talents and potential of those around you.

Before concluding this welcome, I want to acknowledge and honor those who have gone before us who have done so much to make Hampden-Sydney the distinctive and remarkable college that it is. As we move through the presentation of awards today, you will see that most of our awards carry the name of an individual or individuals. Some are alumni who walked these halls and this beautiful campus before you; others are professors or staff members who made the education of Hampden-Sydney students their life's work; and others are benefactors, whose support makes possible the teaching and learning that we do at this great College.

Again, congratulations to our award winners!