

HONOR AT HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

Remarks for the Honor Convocation
August 19, 2016

Over the last year, you have taken many steps to become a Hampden-Sydney man; tonight is almost surely the most important of those steps.

Every college and university in the country focuses on the intellect, but Hampden-Sydney College places as much emphasis on the development of your character as the education of your mind. Our mission “to form good men and good citizens” written by my predecessor in 1775 and practiced here at Hampden-Sydney College ever since, emphasizes the importance of developing the whole man, the intellect, of course, but also the physical, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual.

Our Honor Code is a key to your development as a citizen and a man of character. It asks you to take responsibility for your actions and it asks you to hold others accountable for their actions. It is, then, asking you to become a citizen. Far too common is a notion of citizenship as a one-way street of what our country and government can do for us. Less acknowledged nowadays is recognition that citizenship entails great responsibility. The freedoms we enjoy from life in a democratic republic depend on the responsibilities we are willing to assume as citizens in this country. Freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same citizenship coin. We seek to create here at Hampden-Sydney a model of living in a democratic republic. We place great trust in your ability to govern yourselves. But, this freedom to govern yourselves entails a great responsibility. Tonight, as we have for generations, we ask you to accept that responsibility. While you should feel the weight of this responsibility, you will reap a lifetime of rewards from what you do here tonight. As one former Honor Court Chairman has written, “Living in a community that believed in Honor ingrained a thought process and way of life into my and my fellow classmates’ moral fiber. To this day, I know that ... Hampden-Sydney men act with honor reflexively, not after considered thought, and it is that reflexive action which sets our students and graduates apart.”

Welcome into the community of Hampden-Sydney men.