

# POSSIBILITIES FULFILLED

## Remarks at the Kick-off of Our Financial Campaign

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What a privilege it is for me to stand before you tonight as we write another chapter in the storied history of Hampden-Sydney. Tonight is about the future and the possibilities of one of the most distinctive colleges in the country. But let me begin by focusing on who we are, because our identity is surely one of our greatest strengths. We are a College that has pursued the same mission “to form good men and good citizens” for all of its 243 years, a mission that is as important and relevant as it has ever been in the College’s history. Just as distinctive as our mission, is the way we fulfill that mission. In a day and age when many colleges and universities seem adrift, we hold fast to a few timeless principles about how to offer young men a transformative coming-of-age experience.

We believe in rigorous academics. The cornerstone of our academic program rests on the belief that nothing is more important than a young man knowing how to express himself well. We also believe that it is important for college students to learn about our society’s history, creativity, and genius. We believe that if young men are going to be good citizens, they must study and learn about this country’s history and its institutions of government. We believe in the power of high expectations to transform youths into men. Here’s how a current junior from this region describes this transformation:

*During my high school days and even early in my college career, I wanted to do the bare minimum. As everyone knows, the bare minimum isn’t acceptable here at Hampden-Sydney. At first, I hated having to actually do my school work and put forth effort, but I have quickly seen the results of high standards. The professors and coaches here hold everyone accountable and they aren’t shy about calling-out someone if he is slacking or not performing to the best of his abilities. My work ethic has changed drastically since the day I stepped on this campus back in 2015, and I can’t credit my H-SC experiences enough. The improvement I have seen in my grades and overall lifestyle is vast, and I can’t wait to keep improving.*

In addition to rigorous academics, we believe that developing character is every bit as important as developing intellect. Many of you have heard me quote a former president of Swarthmore on this point, but it is worth quoting him again:

*It is not enough to develop intellect, for intellect by itself is essentially amoral, capable of evil as well as good. We must develop the character which makes intellect constructive, and the personality which makes it effective.*

This is a time when our society most needs young people who have a moral compass and the ability to distinguish between better and worse courses of action. While most colleges and universities in this country are running from the responsibility to teach character, we instill character and values by asking our young men to live with two cherished codes—our Honor Code and Code of Conduct. But, perhaps even more important than these codes, Hampden-Sydney students develop character

by living in an environment of accountability for their words and deeds. Here's how a current senior describes this process:

*The most profound lesson Hampden-Sydney has gifted me is that it is ... not necessary to identify with the majority. Knowledge and truth may not be where the majority says it is. Popular opinions and actions deserve to be analyzed and critiqued. Rather than feeling a pressure to conform and remain within the safety of the majority, I have been equipped with a freedom to search and discover truth for myself. I have been taught the importance of honor and integrity and uphold these values at all times.*

We also believe in brotherhood. Nearly everyone in this room has experienced the bonds that are forged here over four years. And, this brotherhood is shared from one generation of Hampden-Sydney men to the next, so it is no surprise we are cited for having one of the best alumni networks for launching graduates' careers, or that we recently made *The Wall Street Journal's* Top Ten list for career preparation. But, the Hampden-Sydney brotherhood is more than friendships and networking. It is a culture, an expectation that we will hold each other accountable for living into our mission to form good men and good citizens. It is a manifestation of the proverb that just as "iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Here's how one of last year's graduates described this aspect of our brotherhood:

*What I found at Hampden-Sydney was more than I could have hoped for: I found myself growing academically and socially, and my character was changing. Through the help of friends, professors, and other mentors, I became a more complete individual, acquiring qualities like a respect for service, a drive to lift others, and the motivation to spread this growth beyond myself. I could not have done this without the support group that I developed. They drove me to embrace the College's position that the formation of a good man and a good citizen was imperative. I am grateful to all who assisted me on this journey, and in addition, I am grateful that they also revealed to me the greatest secret—that this journey doesn't end.*

For all of the reasons I have just described, we can and should take a great deal of satisfaction in the educational experience we offer young men. We could even become content and satisfied with the transformative work we do. But since I arrived here in the summer of 2016, I have been challenging you to think boldly about the future. We revel in our legacy, but what if the last 243 years of this great College's history are only a dress rehearsal for our most important moment? What if we think of our history as not just a legacy we have inherited, but a destiny that requires fulfilling?

What does it mean to fulfill our destiny, to fulfill our possibilities as a college? Possibilities fulfilled is a financial campaign, but it is not about raising money; it is about how that money will allow us to double-down on what this college is, and achieve our promise as one of this country's greatest colleges. And, above all, it is about creating even more possibilities for the young men of Hampden-Sydney. This campaign has two fundamentally important objectives:

First, we seek to ensure that talented young men can have access to all of the opportunities of a Hampden-Sydney education regardless of their family's financial circumstances, and half of our campaign goal is to increase our need-based scholarship endowment. We have just heard how Gui Guimaraes has benefitted from his years at Hampden-Sydney, and we have also been a richer community because we have had him here. But, Gui could not have attended Hampden-Sydney without the Davis Fellowship. The same is true for so many scholarship recipients.

Our efforts to grow our scholarship endowments got a wonderful boost last year, when the Carpenter Foundation awarded us \$4 million to endow need-based scholarships. But, this grant comes with a significant matching component, so we need more investors—alumni, faculty and staff, and friends of the College—who are prepared to invest in young men the way Norwood and Marguerite Davis, Ron and Sandy Heinemann, and many others have done over many decades to ensure that young men have access to a Hampden-Sydney education.

Our campaign is also about enhancing the outstanding educational experience we offer young men. It is about offering academic and co-curricular programs that prospective students will find attractive and current students find engaging. And, it is about investing in a remarkable faculty and staff that is uncommonly committed to mentoring our students.

Our faculty colleagues believe that students learn best by doing, so they are considering proposals that would require our students to engage in “hands-on learning” by participating in internship, off-campus study, service learning, and research opportunities. With the generous assistance of many lead investors, we are already moving to enrich and strengthen our signature Rhetoric Program, the sciences, the arts, the Wilson Center for Leadership in the Public Interest, and the Flemming Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. We have exciting plans for teaching the history of this country by allowing our students to experience that history first hand. We want to launch an outstanding outdoor education program that embraces our students’ interests and takes full advantage of our location. And, we have an athletic director and coaches who are committed to Hampden-Sydney having the finest Division III athletic program in the country. All of these possibilities are within our reach.

Organizations came into existence because humankind learned early-on that our greatest endeavors cannot be accomplished by individuals acting alone. That is why entrepreneurs start businesses and why citizens form governments. It is also why a group of patriots founded this College in 1775. Organizations sometimes lose their way; organizations that no longer have a compelling mission or purpose do not deserve the loyalty and support of their members. But that is not the case with Hampden-Sydney. We are blessed to have a noble and compelling mission, a dedicated faculty and staff, an outstanding educational program, a beautiful campus, and loyal and devoted alumni. To achieve our ambitions and to fulfill our possibilities, we need your prayers, generosity, devotion and love. I have shared the testimonies of several students tonight to underscore the profound ways this College transforms the lives of young men. In closing, allow me to share one more testimony—this by a current junior who writes about his love for this College:

*Love is a relationship you share, and the properties of that relationship that make you a better and more complete person. Hampden-Sydney has shown me love, and I intend to show every ounce of mine in return. This place is my brothers who compel me toward excellence with a uniquely powerful combination of overwhelming support and friendly competition. This place has formed not just who I am now, but who I will be for the rest of my life. I have matured, grown, failed and succeeded, but most importantly, I have become a better man and a more complete person.*

What a beautiful testimony to our great work. Let us leave here tonight, inspired by our work and dedicated to boldly fulfilling our possibilities.