

FROM THE BRAFFERTON

William and Mary Words to Live By

This is the College's 317th academic year. At its threshold, many words were spoken to our new students. These freshmen, undergraduate transfers, and new professional and graduate students came with powerful credentials. They were chosen from record-breaking pools of applicants across our five schools. Here are three of the most heartfelt and insistent messages our new students heard.

First, welcome! You have been very carefully chosen from a great host of talented applicants and come to us already accomplished, with great potential. Individually

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and collectively, you are now cherished members of the William and Mary community, both during your time on campus and for a lifetime. Until you shuffle off your mortal coils, William and Mary will be an important and proud part of your identity.

Second, connect and stay connected to your *alma mater*! E.M. Forster began his

novel *Howards End* with the epigraph: “Only connect.” “Only connect” is the refrain of the song that William and Mary sings these days to our new students as we welcome them into a College family centered in Williamsburg and now extending across the United States and beyond, over 85,000 strong.

Third, William and Mary people are stewards of a magnificent inheritance. The privilege of participating in this inheritance carries with it responsibilities. We are charged to build on the foundation that we have inherited from those who labored to create it over three centuries, often at great personal sacrifice. We are charged in our time to do our

part to ensure the College's continued service to the larger good and its continued preeminence among colleges and universities.

The speaker at Opening Convocation on Aug. 28, 2009, was James B. Comey Jr. '82, LL.D. '08, vice president of the Alumni Association. Mr. Comey has stayed faithfully connected to his *alma mater* and been a true steward of his inheritance from it. He knows what has sustained the College over the generations and made it one of the country's iconic institutions.

Let me quote how Jim Comey ended his remarks at Convocation. His words to William and Mary's new students were powerful. They speak to us all:

“[T]oday you add your light to the beacon that has always lit the way for this nation, this school that produced those who literally designed this country, but also those who have long nurtured and protected it.

“And this isn't about long-gone people in powdered wigs. You can look to any corner of American life today and see members of the family you have just joined. They are in visible roles, leading our most important institutions or dominating the arts and entertain-



ment; or they are in countless less visible, but equally vital roles — teaching, healing, inventing and helping.

“Your membership in this family will change your life. But the nature of this family, this Tribe, is a gift, purchased for you at huge personal and financial cost by those who went before. As a new member of the family that has always guided the life of this great country, you have obligations to which you must be faithful.

“Your first obligation is to never, *ever* fail to help a fellow member of the Tribe and to look for ways to advance those who follow you. Hire them, recommend them, mentor them, protect them. Those ahead will do the same for you. It is a shared obligation that lasts a lifetime.

“Your second obligation is a solemn duty to give back some of what will come to you by virtue of membership in this remarkable Tribe. Contributing your time, your talent, and even your money to this family is a matter of honor as important to this College as the Code. Those who follow you depend upon you.

“Never forget that.

“The long line of patriots and servants that began at this spot 300 years ago now stretches down and includes you. By joining that line, you have made it better.

“Welcome to the Tribe. I am honored to call you sisters and brothers.”

We should emblazon Jim Comey's words on the portals of the campus and stamp them on every William and Mary heart. Read them again!

W. TAYLOR REVELEY III
President, College of William and Mary

A portrait of James B. Comey Jr. '82, LL.D. '08, vice president of the Alumni Association. He is a man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a suit and tie.

Web exclusive:

Watch the Convocation speech of James B. Comey Jr. '82, LL.D. '08 at www.wmalumni.com/?comey_vid