



New Student Convocation
August 28, 2023

Welcome home to the Class of 2027! Welcome to Sister Patrice, one of our longest serving former presidents (15 years) and former prioress of the Caldwell Dominican order.

Welcome to Sister Luella, Prioress of the Caldwell Dominican order. Welcome to Sister Pat, the Vicareess of the Caldwell Sisters of St. Dominic, and Sister Marie of the Dominican Council. We also welcome Sister Donna, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Newark, and we have Sister Kathleen and Sister Lena of our Dominican order from whom you will hear in a few minutes.

All of us — Sisters, faculty members, staff, administrators, our Board and other members of the Caldwell University community — are thrilled to see you here this fall. Hello as well, to all of the parents and family members who are here. You too are valued members of the University community. Our students are who they are in large part because of the love, guidance and attention you devoted to them.

In the coming years, we will all follow your academic progress. We will admire your performances in athletics or musicals or academic events, and other activities. For my part, I may buy you a cup of coffee in the Café, see you at lunch or a basketball or volleyball game or on campus.

I fully anticipate we will assemble again with your family, to watch with pride as you walk across the stage in May of 2027 to shake my hand when you earn your degree. Indeed this is the GOAL!

Caldwell University is a beautiful setting to study and to engage each other, with historic buildings such as Rosary Hall or the Jennings Library alongside newer buildings like Werner Hall or the Newman Center. As you have all seen, our campus has gracious open spaces, more trees per square foot than many other universities in this area and a wonderfully vibrant and safe location. We are in the top rankings in the North for: Undergraduate teaching, Best Value, and in promoting social mobility.

Buildings and settings are only a small part of the story of universities. Indeed, the faculty

and staff are what makes a university special. Harvard is Harvard because of its faculty and staff, not because of its buildings and so too Caldwell is Caldwell because of its faculty and staff.

Please, I would ask all faculty to stand . . . students please recognize these academic leaders who are here for you. Thank you. Staff . . . please stand. Students please recognize this team who are so ready to help and support you. Thank you.

I can tell you unequivocally that the University is filled with distinguished faculty who care deeply about the students they teach, work closely with and mentor students. There is not a single faculty member who does not see the centrality of undergraduate education here. Staff are no less important to you and committed to helping you succeed.

Caldwell University is beautiful . . . and the faculty and staff are wonderful, but a campus lacks the vitality that only students can bring. So I am so very pleased to have you back on campus

The beginning of college marks one of the most important times of your lives. Take my word for it . . . it will go by in an instant when you look back on it! I want to emphasize this point with a presentation of your class time piece. Dr. Chernobilsky will present to me your class watch.

Your watch will be placed on our Mace today . . . to demonstrate your beginning with us. Tolkien said “All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us” My action signifies to us and to you that your time has begun and for you to decide.

The watch will appear on the university mace when it is used at official university ceremonies along with the other classes’ watches. You will see it again at commencement for the last time when your time ends with us. Not that I am discouraging you from continuing on to graduate school with us but that is a new time- line! I do this to impress upon you that Indeed . . . our time together is limited . . .

- Make the best of it
- Make yourself proud of what you accomplish
- Make a difference here

Over the next four years, you will learn & experience a great deal. I hope and trust that your development will not be confined to academics. That is, I hope you will also grow as artists, athletes, and socially engaged citizens. I hope you will gain friends . . . and lifelong colleagues. I hope you will have fun!

You will come to understand how learning in the Caldwell University community where your fellow students are likely going to have ideas and backgrounds different from your own. That can enrich and broaden your understanding of the world, and can help you define the place that you want to take in society or your profession. I can guarantee you that the amount of growth you see in yourselves will be amazing.

Parents, please don't worry. Your student will be only a phone call or text message away! And they will always need and want your support and love.

However, one of the most important aspects of moving into adulthood is the development of responsible and mature judgment that can - yes, CAN - only come with independence. I say that professional maturation "can occur" rather than "will occur" because, in truth, not all students make the difficult leap from student to professional.

All students will get a college diploma for completing the requirements. The truth is, many of the facts you learn here will become outdated within a decade or so of your graduation. Of course you will learn so much more than facts! But you need to maintain your knowledge and skills. Consider college students of your parent's generation.

Those of us who studied statistics learned to program in Fortran, rather than Python. Political science was still dominated by the discussion of the Cold War and Soviet-US relations . . . well that is still here. Think of the concepts that were simply not in our vocabularies: social entrepreneurship, digital humanities or cybersecurity. I can guarantee you that by the time you reach your 25th college reunion — and meet up with the students you see around you, all a little older and certainly much wiser — a whole new set of ideas and concerns will exist.

"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything" George Bernard Shaw once said. And Einstein also said, "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change." If you leave here merely having mastered a set of facts, the value of your college education will have a very short shelf life. But, if you leave Caldwell University having learned how to drive your own intellectual and professional development, build on your creativity and critical thinking abilities the value of your education will be strengthened over the course of your lifetime. One way to accomplish that is to read . . . not tweets, Instagrams or posts, but really read. There is no better way to exercise your brain and intellect!

Although you are being asked to take responsibility for your own education, we do not expect you to do this without assistance. Your advisers, counselors, coaches and professors stand ready to provide guidance and support . . . as is true of all staff as well. Use these resources fully and wisely. If you do, I am sure that your experience at Caldwell University will be even better than you anticipated when you made your

decision to join the Class of 2027!

Welcome to Caldwell University! Go Cougars and . . . May God bless you all!

Jeffrey D. Senese, Ph.D.
President

