

August 2012 – Convocation Speech

For: Adele C. Brumfield, Director of Admissions and Recruitment, UW-Madison

Good morning,

It is such a privilege to stand before you today, as the Director of the Office of Admissions and Recruitment. I represent an office of more than 50 professionals, whose job it is to recruit talented freshmen and transfer students, like you, who have a wide range of interests. If you happen to be wondering, “Did I make the right choice to come here?” I assure you, that my team and I made the right decision in admitting each and every one of you. On behalf of my office, we want to welcome you to this amazing community.

We took the time to understand each of you as a whole person, from looking at your transcripts and grade point averages; test scores and personal statements; reviewing extracurricular involvement and letters of recommendation. We knew from all your achievements, that you possessed that spark—that desire—to make the most of this rare opportunity.

In fact, there were many students interested in being a part of our community, but not all of them are here today. For this fall alone, we received more than 29,000 applications. You are sitting here today, part of 6,200 new freshmen and 1,350 new transfer students. That, is truly commendable!

Whether or not you know it, your legacy at this university has already started. It’s started with where you’ve chosen to live. Who your first friends have become. Figuring out this new city, Madison, to make it your new home. Your memories, stories, and accomplishments will follow you long after this first week, beyond your first year, and well into the future beyond graduation.

Think for a moment about the students who have come before you, who have lived and learned on this campus. For many of you, it’s become somewhat of a family tradition to study here. You have shared memories of being on campus as a young child, or hearing about the accomplishments of your mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Being here, for

some of your fellow students, is the fulfillment of a dream for an entire family. There are two students that illustrate that, with us here today. One, from Arrowhead, Wisconsin, has a long family history of proud Badgers in his family. His Great-Great-Great Grandfather, attended in the 1850s, and his Great-Great Grandfather began studying here in 1880. Yet, this proud tradition isn't contained just to the continental United States. As a world-leading institution, Badger families around the world are also proud to send their sons and daughters here, from China, the Republic of Korea, India and Malaysia. In fact, one student here today from Taiwan, has both a mother and father that are proud Badger alumni. Think to yourself, who in your future family, will you encourage to also experience this place.

Another great legacy of our university is in the form of our alumni. I've had a great fortune to meet our talented alumni throughout Wisconsin, the United States, and the world. Each of them remind me of how this education let them experience something special—something that did not happen to their peers at other schools. They told me how their careers, and lifestyle, were all made possible because of what they achieved here.

Your legacy will depend on how well you use the things you learn, both in class, and outside of the classroom. Take advantage of the diverse research opportunities that you won't find anywhere else. Excel, and thrive, in your courses. Get involved in activities that will excite and inspire you. Plan to challenge yourself, and achieve more than what you think might be possible.

Reflect on what you want to learn and create a clear picture of what you want to accomplish here. Remember to give back to this community everything that it will bring to you. Find a way, each day, to live what we call, The Wisconsin Experience.

Now, on behalf of the Institution, I am pleased to accept and welcome the entering class of 2012.

[STAGE TEAM GIVES ROUND OF APPLAUSE]

Please be seated.

Rather than asking a current UW-Madison student to speak, we asked for you, our incoming freshman and transfer students to share with us thoughts on what your legacy might be.

We had an incredible response to this call, and a number of wonderful speeches were submitted. At this time, I'd like to recognize our six finalists for the contest.

They are:

- Caleb Gerbitz [*KAYlib GURbits*]
- Rose King
- Lauren Koenig [*LAWren CONig*]
- Lindsay Nigh [*LINDsea Ni*]
- Alex Prueter [*Alex PROOter*]
- Timothy Shelton

Please join me in congratulating all of our finalists.

[WAIT FOR APPLAUSE]

Our winning essayist is an incoming freshman from Mukwonago, Wisconsin.

At this time, I welcome Caleb Gerbitz.

[EXIT PODIUM]