

THE 5 CHALLENGES

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SOUTH CAROLINA HONORS COLLEGE

BE HERE. In three years and nine months, this auditorium will be filled with your family, friends, classmates, professors and one guy who wandered in off the street just to see what was happening. I challenge every single one of you to be here. To graduate with honors from the South Carolina Honors College. To be here to receive your Honors College pin, your champagne flute and — this is new — your Honors College medallion. To be here, you need to begin with the end in mind, and therefore take good care of yourself. Don't be foolish or reckless. Do your work first. Stay focused. Be safe. And be here in three years and nine months, more or less.

BE TOGETHER. Just take a moment to look around at your classmates. You are an amazing group of people. There is in this auditorium right now, enough talent, imagination, passion, compassion and sheer genius to change the world. To make life better for many others on this planet. Really. Support each other. Introduce yourself to people you don't know. If you see someone sitting alone in the cafe, go sit with them (with their permission of course!). And this might come as a surprise, but we occasionally admit one or two shy, nerdy types into the Honors College every single year. If you are blessed with the extrovert gene, please reach out and help others to connect.

BE BOLD. Introduce yourself to your professors and ask them if they have a research project you can work on. Go see the extraordinary people in the National Fellowships and Scholar Programs office to learn about awards you can apply for. Pursue an internship, service learning or study abroad. Keep an open mind. Explore your options. Be bold enough to change and evolve.

BE KIND. We need to live on this planet together for a while longer. I don't think Elon Musk will have Mars ready for us anytime soon. We face enormous challenges in every direction: microplastics in the polar regions; 108 degrees in Paris, France; our football schedule has been ranked the most difficult in the nation. We really need to be kind to each other, and most importantly, you need to be kind to yourself. Honors students - I have seen this happen every one of my nine years as dean — believe they can go without sleep, food, exercise and fun — because they must be perfect. You won't be perfect. Do your best, but keep in mind that the most powerful learning occurs when we don't succeed. But then we learn and try again.

BE. Time will accelerate. Pay attention. Keep a journal. Keep in touch with people who matter to you. Find more people who matter to you. Otherwise, you will wake up one morning, 67 years old, and you'll wonder... "Hey, what the heck happened? Who is that old man in the mirror, and why am I combing his hair?"

I look forward to getting to know you and work with you. It is the greatest honor and joy of my life. Help me learn who you are by introducing yourself when you see me. That is my challenge and the challenge of our superb staff... to get to know each one of you and help you live your best life.

