



Patrick F. Leahy

Fall Convocation | August 24, 2017

Good morning.

Welcome to Fall Convocation 2017, a semi-annual event that brings the entire campus community together to celebrate the start of a new semester. It is my hope that such events continue to improve communication and collaboration here on campus. Thank you all for making the time to be here this morning. I sincerely appreciate it.

I'd like to take a moment to welcome in a special way those of you who are new colleagues here at Wilkes. If you have joined the University community at any time since the Spring Convocation — that is, anytime since January of this year — would you please stand so that we might welcome you here to Wilkes?

The poet, Mary Oliver, asked, “What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Each of us has dedicated our one wild and precious life to Wilkes. Thank you!

This morning, I want to continue the tradition that was inaugurated last year by presenting the President's Awards for Excellence. I offer each year at this Fall Convocation awards that promote and celebrate our five values — Scholarship, Innovation, Community, Mentoring, and Diversity — one award for each. You nominated colleagues that you thought were deserving of recognition. Once again, I received some 50 nominations – beautifully written, heart-rending nominations of the incredible work done on this campus day-by-day. I want to thank all of you who took the time and effort to nominate one of your peers. I then shared these nominations with the Cabinet, the members of which provided additional insight for me. I made the final selections. Therefore, if you are disappointed that your nominee was not selected, you have me — and me alone — to blame.

Before we announce this year's awardees, I'd like to recognize one more time last year's winners. Would last year's winners please stand, and remain standing, when I call your names: Dr. Mike Steele for Scholarship, John Carlin for Innovation, Addy Malatesta for Community, Colonel Mark Kaster for Mentoring, and Dr. Helen Davis for Diversity? Join me in recognizing these colleagues one final time. Thank you all for your continued efforts here at Wilkes.

Now, I'd like to announce this year's winners. Once I announce the recipient of each award, I will ask them to come up and receive their awards. If the winners are interested in saying a word or two to all of you, they are welcome to do so, but there is absolutely no obligation.

Scholarship: For his efforts in advancing knowledge through discovery and research to better educate our constituents, the 2017 President's Award for Excellence in Scholarship goes to Dr. Thomas Baldino, professor of political science.

Innovation: For his efforts in promoting programs, ideas, and sustainable practices, the President's Award for Excellence in Innovation goes to Charles Cary, executive director of facilities.

Community: For his efforts in appreciating and collaborating with mutual respect to foster a sense of belonging, the President's Award for Excellence in Community goes to Dr. Mark Allen, dean of students and former interim director of the Honors Program.

Mentoring: For her efforts in nurturing individuals to understand and act on their abilities while challenging them to achieve great things, the President's Award for Excellence in Mentoring goes to Dr. Marie Roke-Thomas, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

Diversity: For her efforts in embracing differences and uniqueness through sincerity, awareness, inclusion and sensitivity, the President's Award for Excellence in Diversity goes to Erica Acosta, associate director of diversity affairs.

Join me in recognizing all of our winners this year.

Now, I'm happy to turn the podium over to our campus leaders from USAC and FAC for comments. This year's chairs are Jacki Lukas and Andy Miller.