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Remarks During New Beginnings

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Remarks during New Beginnings
Ouachita Baptist University
August 18, 2012

rdw

It's so good to see you today. Welcome to Ouachita!

As you all—students, parents, family, friends, faculty, staff—begin the college adventure, I invite you to take a few moments

- To think of home,
- To think of how home represents the task before you, and
- To think of how the task before you is enhancing your internal cognitive structure.

Let's imagine how our thoughts of home might serve as metaphor for the personal growth the next four years will bring.

The more nuanced your cognitive structure,

- The greater the impact of your education,
- The greater the impact of your knowledge and understanding,
- The greater your impact to humanity, the world, and the kingdom.

To begin, here's a question for everyone in the room: **How many windows were in the house where you grew up?**

[ask audience for specific numbers]

You all can produce a number for which you have some confidence.

Remember we're talking about enhancing cognitive structure in the coming four years. Four ideas around which to hang our thoughts: **Perspective, Perception, People, Power.**

Perspective

I can tell you how you came up with that number. You did one of two things:

- You generated an image of the house and then walked around the inside of the house and counted windows from room to room to room; or
- You generated an image of the house and then walked around the outside of the house and counted the windows from wall to wall to wall.

Though most people take the internal route, there is no right or wrong way to do it.

The point here is that education should enable you to take multiple perspectives—for example, both interior and exterior routes—in addressing the challenges your life will face.

Perspective**Perception**

Walk back through the house. Did you see any doorknobs? Any molding? Did you see any art? Did you hear any music? See any books? Smell something delicious cooking in the kitchen?

No? Then I encourage you to work on perception, strive to become a keen observer of the world. Beauty and wisdom are all around us. Allow yourself to be amazed at the small things other people take for granted.

Perspective**Perception****People**

Walk back through the house. Do you see anyone?

We live in a world that loves to hide behind technology. Remember that humans were created to communicate face-to-face, eye-to-eye. Only there flourishes the full richness and meaningfulness of friendship and family. Interpersonal relationships can not be reduced to graffiti pasted on digital walls.

Learn to sustain your attention beyond 140 characters. Tweets may be contemporary haiku poetry but they are not problem-solving tools. Tweet trends may hint at influence, but only intention possesses purpose. If you want to know people—and if you want them to know you—look in their faces.

Perspective**Perception****People****Power**

Walk through your house again.

Did you notice any electrical outlets? I suspect not. As you work to enhance your cognitive structure in the coming years, do not overlook the necessity of understanding math and science. Therein are the two greatest tools humanity ever produced, and we ignore them at our peril.

One last walk through the house: This time try walking through counterclockwise rather than clockwise (or clockwise rather than counterclockwise) if that's how you first toured.

Did you feel the foundation of the home?

The great Greek mathematician Archimedes once observed that if you gave him a fulcrum and a place to stand he could move the Earth. The nuance of your cognitive structure is the fulcrum you will use to become a difference maker. We will help you construct that tool. It will be the house where you live.

However, you need a place to stand, your house needs a foundation, and here at Ouachita we will help you build on the Rock of Ages—for there is no firmer foundation. And in standing on *that* Rock is not only the power to move the Earth but also the power that created it.

Perspective

Perception

People

Power

Welcome to Ouachita! We look forward to helping you build your house.