

Heidelberg Fall 2022 Opening Convocation

President's Remarks

18 August 2022

Thank you, MB Director Rod Miller, Jayce Porter, Zaria Keys! Wow!!!

Good morning to the Class of 2026 and to all undergraduate, transfer, returning, and graduate students! I hope that all of you had a terrific summer with your families and friends while working, playing, traveling, and getting ready for your fall semester.

Thank you very much to all **1,086** FT/PT students for choosing Heidelberg University this year. We are grateful to be here together.

Welcome to our 173rd year of educating young women and men through our integrated *Professional Liberal Arts* curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular programming. We care deeply about your education, engagement, success, graduation, and career placement. In four years, we will be celebrating your Class of 2026 banner!

I extend appreciation to our upper-class students for continuing their Berg journey and participating in the *H Pin Ceremony* on the way in.

Thank you to our Faculty and Staff who have worked diligently to prepare our courses, teams, activities, services, and campus for the start of fall semester. We want all students to be successful.

Our keynote speaker this morning is Heidelberg alum (and Pearl Jam fan!), Mr. Chris Monsour ('99), a distinguished biology teacher with a passion for environmental science at Tiffin Columbian High School. I met Chris through our children who were both lucky to have him as a teacher. His commitment to teaching and learning is phenomenal! Thank you, Chris, for sharing your important message here today.

We are welcoming **255** new first-year and transfer undergraduates to our school this fall. The freshmen are smart, talented, and interesting.

One new student is arriving from Mexico soon; 14 U.S. states are represented; 1% identify as non-binary; 9% are Heidelberg legacy families; 11% of our students are from Tiffin and Seneca County; 13% are in our Honors Program; 20% had a 4.0 or higher GPA in high school (3.54 average freshman GPA highest in recent years!); 22% identify as underrepresented students; 24% competed on Scholars Days; 35% are first generation college students in their families (Congratulations!); 38% are from outside Ohio (Highest in decades!); 38% identify as females; 61% identify as males; 66% are DIII student-athletes; and **100%** of our new students want to engage, succeed, and advance their careers at The Berg.

The top chosen majors after two days of classes are Business, Health & Exercise Science, Sport Management, and Education.

Some interesting background stories too. One of our new students is the grandson of a retired Heidelberg Board member and another student celebrated their 18th birthday at a Student Prince football game last season. We have lots of incoming students who worked jobs during high school, many all four years, one who coached youth baseball and football all four years, and another completed over 300 hours of community service. Leadership is strong in this class of new students, including a team captain, a class president multiple times, a student council president, an athlete given the #1 jersey by the coaches for most dedicated and devoted team player, and a member of a future business leaders group. Not surprising, we have many incoming students with CCP learning experiences. Two young men are starting our BSN 1-2-1 Program to gain that career advantage in the nursing field while also playing football. Finally, one young woman continues to complete the “bucket list” of a close friend she lost in a car accident a few years ago and has dedicated her sports and success to the memory of this friend. All here at Heidelberg now!

In my Convocation habit, I recommend two excellent novels written by Amor Towles. After graduating from Yale and Stanford (English), Towles was an investment banker for 20 years while writing on the side. His first novel (2011) was a bestseller, so he became a fulltime author.

The first book is *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016). With the writing style and storyline grace of a classic Russian novel, Towles tells the saga of Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov who lives under hotel attic house arrest in Moscow for over three decades. Beginning with a Bolshevik tribunal in June 1922 and ending with a KGB search in June 1954, this book is packed with humor, tension, intrigue, glorious scenes, and perhaps the best literary descriptions of food that I have ever read. It is a riveting story of a man with a purpose.

The second book is *The Lincoln Highway* (2021). Ostensibly about traveling the so-called “first road to stretch across America,” the entire story takes place in just ten days in June 1954. This title caught my eye because the actual Lincoln Highway passes through this part of Ohio and you can see occasional highway markings for it. It is about 18-year-old Emmett Watson and his 8-year-old brother Billy who leave NE by car for bigger opportunities in CA after their parents are gone but end up in New York City where the highway actually begins. Lots of characters, themes, surprises, and action. Towles tells the story from shifting first-person I-voices in each chapter and that technique is fun and fascinating.

To all new and returning students, please get engaged and be intentional about everything you imagine. Do not limit your *Big Opportunities* and *Life Advantages* at this University!

It is our privilege to teach, mentor, and serve each one of you in support of your academic and career aspirations. We want all of you to graduate successfully from Heidelberg in four years or sooner to continue your journey and pursue your *Life of Purpose with Distinction*.

Good luck to all of you and especially to the Class of 2026. Thank you!