President Ainlay, trustees, faculty, staff and students …

I am pleased to welcome you today on Founders Day, as we commemorate this anniversary of the College’s charter.

We are, as most of us know, a college of firsts – first New York state charter; first curriculum emphasizing modern languages, history, science and mathematics; first to offer an engineering degree.

Beyond this, however, what’s been fundamental to the College since day one is the entrepreneurial spirit. And that’s what I’d like to honor here this afternoon.

I’m talking about an academic perspective that has nothing to do with technology or starting businesses.

To my fellow faculty members, I say that I’m impressed with how you continue to be entrepreneurially minded, and to communicate across cultures between sciences and humanities, something the English chemist and novelist C.P. Snow espoused in his noted lecture, “The Two Cultures.”

Every day, whether in the classroom, the lab or the studio, you take risks. You experiment. You’re not afraid of the new or unfamiliar; in fact, you welcome academic ventures that really step out and demand to be noticed.

You understand how Union’s liberal arts curriculum gives us the freedom and the responsibility to continually innovate, to persist through failure, to be creative, to dare to jump outside and around traditional lines.

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1 Paraphrased from the inscription atop the Nott Memorial. The inscription atop the Nott was taken from line twenty of the second chapter of the book of “Avot” or “Pirkei Avot”, which is contained in the Mishnah, a part of the Torah.
One need only look at our Steinmetz Symposium to see how much Union inhabits the entrepreneurial spirit. This great celebration of undergraduate research in every shape and form is a testament to student and faculty collaboration. There aren’t a whole lot of other schools that offer something like Steinmetz, which is now entering its 23rd year.

Our unique blend of the liberal arts and engineering gives students balance, and it helps them find their passion and more importantly, live their passion.

I sincerely believe that if we continue to imbue all our students with the entrepreneurial spirit, they will be able to take what they learn here and live it throughout their lives – whether they’re pursuing classics or poetry or history or nanotechnology or mechanical engineering.

That’s what we can and do give our students, every day, every year.

The days are still short, the tasks are still great, and yes, the master is quite urgent, but the bottom line is, the entrepreneurial ways of living and learning were alive on this campus in 1795, and they’re at the heart of what we do now, in 2013.

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