President Ainlay, Trustees, faculty, staff and students …

I am proud to join you today as we begin another year. As a longtime faculty member and Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee, I can say unequivocally that Union is one of the best colleges in this country.

I give a special welcome to the Class of 2018. I hope your time at Union will be transformative, and that you will also use your time here to help transform this college.

One of the first things you’ll learn is that there are no right answers to the world’s most important questions, only perspectives. Or, as the great philosopher Nietzsche said, “There are no facts, only interpretations.”

So today I want to challenge you to question what you believe, and what you were told to believe, and continually challenge yourself by doing what is uncomfortable, what is hard.

Whether you’re new or returning student, I challenge you to build perspective, understand issues from many points of views. This is what a Union liberal arts education is all about.

Don’t hide in your academic departments. Take classes from all parts of campus. Get to know students and faculty who have different interests and beliefs.

With the newly renovated Karp Hall for the Humanities on the horizon – scheduled to be completed at the end of this calendar year – it’s the perfect time to be thinking about perspective across all disciplines.
Engineers and computer scientists are going to have to understand the cultural, political, religious and economic perspectives in order to design sustainable solutions.

Social scientists must understand how science and technology will impact our civil liberties, and how they can be used to benefit society as a whole.

Our scientists must contemplate the ethics and societal impact of their discoveries.

And the humanists and artists among us need to leverage technology to find new ways to express the human condition and promulgate culture to an even wider audience.

To sum up: I encourage you to stay open to new experiences, ideas and ways of thinking. Get involved. For each of you, this will mean something very different. Consider taking a position in student government. Become an active member of your Minerva house. Transform Greek life. Volunteer. Join or create a club. Whatever you decide, do it with passion and conviction and do not be deterred.

Make the best of this versatile educational landscape of ours so you can someday, in the not too distant future, successfully tackle the real challenges that society faces.

Thank you, good luck and enjoy.