

## NEW HAVEN PROMISE RECEPTION

Welcome everyone.

And congratulations to all of our New Haven Promise Scholarship recipients.

We're delighted that you chose to attend Southern, and we promise to make your stay with us intellectually invigorating and personally rewarding.

Providing access to higher education and creating pathways to success for students from all walks of life is what we do here.

And it's an honor for me – and my university – to help advance the vital work that New Haven Promise has done to ensure that a college degree becomes an attainable goal for all of this city's students.

The opportunity to attend college is one that most people in this country, and indeed across the world, still do not have.

And although a college degree has been shown to greatly improve a person's earning power throughout his or her lifetime....

higher education also delivers benefits to students that go way beyond simply being a credential for securing employment.

The students in this room have clearly worked hard to reach this point.

And you deserve the reward of higher education.

But the city of New Haven, too – and in fact, the entire region – benefits from your success.

With your college education just beginning, you still have many choices to make, many paths to consider.

And I'm sure you're already wondering – how am I going to do it all?

How am I going to devote my energy to my academic work, to my friendships, my families, my activities beyond the classroom?

Well, let me give you a little bit of advice as you take your first tentative steps on this exciting journey:

Find your mentor.

Find someone with whom you connect, someone who can support you, and help guide you through the many opportunities you will have before you.

A mentor can be a sounding board, a confidante, a coach, an adviser, a friend.

Find your mentor.

But don't think that being a college student is all about finding someone to help you.

Your success in college has as much to do with how you lead your life as it does with the grades you earn.

A big part of your education will involve learning how to interact with people whose ideas and values may differ from yours.

So be open to new experiences and unfamiliar ideas.

Because at the end of the day, you'll become a more well-rounded individual: a doer as well as a thinker.

Caring about others, serving the community, and creating meaning in your own life – this is what it's all about.

As the American writer Walker Percy said, "You can get all A's and still flunk life."

Students, you are on your way, and I congratulate you as you launch yourselves into your new lives here at Southern.

My very best wishes to all of you – and I look forward to personally presenting each of you with your Southern degree four years from now!