

Convocation Remarks  
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Welcome to The University of Alabama in Huntsville. You made a good choice. We're confident you will enjoy your time here, and that you will take away a lot that will serve you well in your personal and professional lives.

UAH by university standards is a young university. Seeds of UAH were sown in 1949, when the US Army decided to relocate the United States' rocket program, led by Dr. Wernher Von Braun, from Texas to the Redstone Arsenal. At about the same time the University of Alabama announced the opening of an extension center in Huntsville. UAH began as The University of Alabama Huntsville Center in January 1950, enrolling 137 freshman students in 10 classes.

Morton Hall opened in 1961. In 1961 to 1962 the Research Institute was organized and housed at Brown Engineering. In June of 1961, Dr. Von Braun addressed the Alabama Legislature requesting funds to construct a facility for the Research Institute on the campus, which was to support the Army and NASA. In 1964, the University of Alabama announced that undergraduate degrees would be awarded in Huntsville and in 1966 that the Huntsville Center would become a branch campus, The University of Alabama in Huntsville.

In 1969, the University of Alabama System was formed, and the newly established Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama voted to establish the branches in Huntsville and Birmingham as autonomous campuses of the System.

UAH's history is inextricably linked to men and women and events of signal importance to the safety and security of the nation and to the exploration of the environment beyond the planet on which we live. The University is also home to the discovery of high-temperature superconductivity in 1987 by Professor M.K. Wu and his graduate students Jim Ashburn and C.J. Torng. Ashburn developed the compound, Yttrium Barium Cooper Oxide, and successfully tested it in Wilson Hall. An historical plaque stands in front of Wilson Hall commemorating the event. Another famous graduate of UAH is history graduate John Hendricks, who launched the Discovery Chanel, and Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales was a UAH student.

You will study in a broad array of academic programs in engineering and science, business, the arts and the humanities, the social sciences, education, and the nursing profession. And, you will have the opportunity to participate in research projects and interact with companies in the Research Park as interns. A significant fraction of you and your upper class colleagues are residential students, leading to a vibrant campus life. The new student center, Charger Union, slated to open in January 2014 along with an increasing emphasis at UAH on student life will only enhance your experience here.

A recently completed construction project includes the Greenway, the site of this Convocation. The Greenway will be continued north of Holmes Ave, site of Charge Union, next to the Nursing Building to Roberts Hall, which houses the Department of Music, the sculpture studio, and soon-to-be new home of the Department of Education. Also underway is renovation and expansion of the Nursing Building, construction of the Severe Weather Institute and Radar and Lightening Laboratories, and recently completed, the Rise School of Huntsville, a preschool providing the highest quality of early childhood education services to children with developmental disabilities and children without disabilities. For UAH, the Rise School will serve as a laboratory learning environment for Nursing and Education students.

You have a strong Student Government Association and numerous student clubs available in which I would encourage you to participate. There are a lot of faculty and staff here ready to help you succeed. I would encourage you to call on them. You will need to work hard at UAH, but relax a little on the way as well. It will all be worth it.

I'll see you around campus and at various UAH events I'm sure. I'm glad to communicate with you as well via e-mail from time to time, as long as it is about loftier issues than parking! I seem to get a lot of suggestions about parking!

Best of luck in your academic career.