

Old Dominion University President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
Investiture Ceremony
October 21, 2022
Chartway Arena
10:00 AM

Rector Bradley and Provost Agho, thank you.

I will hold these items sacred as a symbol of this institution and the importance of the position you have entrusted to me.

I pledge to uphold the integrity and mission of Old Dominion University throughout my presidency.

First of all, please join me in giving President Gee another hearty round of applause.

President Gee, thank you for your message from 1995 that inspired me as I sat in Columbus, Ohio as a new professional in higher education.

Little did I know that - nearly three decades later - we would be sitting on this stage together!

You have a witty sense of humor that is second to none and great taste in bow ties.

More importantly, you have served as a trailblazer in American higher education and paved the way for so many, including me.

You are truly the godfather of modern higher education in our nation.

Thank you, Gordon!

And, we cannot forget a dear friend of the Commonwealth of Virginia and a true champion of quality education, Dr. Belle Wheelan.

A former community college president and secretary of education....and now the leader of our accrediting body, President Wheelan is a force to be reckoned with.

I first met her in 2016 and, since that time, she has become a trusted source of support and truth.

Let's give her a hearty round of applause!

Also, join me in giving Dr. Derrick Gragg another hearty round of applause.

Through many years of friendship, we have supported each other as we navigated a host of challenges.

I am honored to count you as one of my dearest friends and most trusted colleagues.

Thank you, Derrick!

Let's give him another round of applause!

I would like to take a moment to recognize several very important individuals who are here today and critical to this University and the future of the Commonwealth.

I would be remiss if I did not begin with recognition of my bosses, members of the Board of Visitors.

Please stand and remain standing as I call your name:

- Bruce Bradley;
- Yvonne Allmond;
- Rob Broermann;
- Bob Corn;
- Dennis Ellmer;
- Brian Holland;
- Larry Hill;
- Kay Kemper;
- Rudy Middleton;
- Elza Mitchum;
- Ross Mugler;
- Armistead Williams; and
- Antra Patel.

These outstanding individuals have continuously dedicated their time and talent to ensure that Old Dominion University's best and brightest days are ahead.

Please join me in a hearty round of applause for the Board of Visitors!

To my former cabinet and staff, John Jones, Lyn Lepre, Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Angela Joyner, Angie Mitchell, and Susan Trageser, thank you for your hard work over the years, friendship, and words of wisdom.

I am so proud of each of you and your accomplishments!

And, I look forward to following your amazing careers in the years to come!

Please join me in applauding these outstanding individuals!

To some of my closest friends that are with us today, thank you for all of your constant support and words of encouragement over the years!

Your continued friendship is so special to me and my family.

Each of you deserves an applause!

Could I ask all of my friends in attendance from West Virginia and Southwest Virginia to please stand?

These individuals have remained an important part of my life!

To Old Dominion University's Leadership Council, which includes the vice presidents and academic deans, please stand.

This team has locked arms and worked so hard over the past year to advance our institution.

I know they have the determination and drive to continue our progress and success for many years to come.

Let's give this group a round of applause for all they do and will continue to do for their fellow Monarchs!

I must thank my family, the Hemphills, Wilkins, and the Rosas.

As a family, we experienced a great deal of loss in recent years, but we have continued our commitment to each other.

I cannot thank you enough for your prayers and love over the years!

Let's give my family a round of applause!

To my wife, my rock, and your First Lady – Dr. Marisela Rosas Hemphill, please stand.

Thank you for believing in me, loving me, supporting me, and accompanying me on this remarkable journey.

You are so special to me, our family, and this community!

To my children, Jada, Jordan, Catalina, and Cruz, please know how proud I am of each of you.

It is a joy and a privilege to have the pleasure of being your father.

I love all of you!

Please give my kids a round of applause!

To Ashley Schumaker and members of the Presidential Inauguration Planning Committee and Alumni Relations team, as well as event staff and volunteers, thank you for your hard work and sheer dedication in planning and executing today's ceremony and all of our Homecoming events!

To the platform party, including our distinguished speakers, the delegates who have joined us from across the state and the nation, our outstanding faculty, and guests who have filled the audience, good morning and thank you for being here today!

It is truly an honor to stand before you as Old Dominion University's 9th President!

Today is a day to celebrate, reflect, and anticipate.

Today is a celebration of our storied history and lasting legacy; a reflection of our proud traditions; and, last but certainly not least - anticipation for our bold and promising future!

When my family and I arrived in Hampton Roads last summer, we were welcomed by the Monarch Nation!

To our fellow Monarchs, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, we say thank you!

You have provided constant support, unwavering passion, and sincere optimism as we navigated this past year.

When we began this journey together on July 1, 2021, we made a commitment to excellence, accountability, transparency, and student-centeredness.

Without question, Old Dominion University's long-standing reputation and proven success in providing access and opportunity are the cornerstone of our efforts and will continue to guide us as we move forward together.

In order for Old Dominion University to continue this critical work, we must take several important steps.

First, we must continue the journey of being student-centered.

It must be an aspect of everything we do!

Second, faculty must be active partners in the governance of this Great University!

Third, we must be forward-focused.

That cannot happen without the engagement of our alumni and donors.

In terms of student-centeredness, we have to be nimble and committed to working with all of our students.

Anyone can admit students with perfect grades and tout their successes.

That's not the real world!

And, that's not the purpose of ODU!

We must embrace our public mission and be dedicated to ensuring student success and enabling access and opportunity for all Virginians.

The truth is that higher education is operating under an industrial model in a post-industrial society.

And, that was before a global health pandemic drastically changed all facets of our lives.

Ultimately, higher education's purpose is to equip students for success in life, the workplace, and their communities.

This purpose has remained constant for centuries; however, everything around higher education is changing.

Now, we can allow skyrocketing tuition, growing student debt, the enrollment cliff, the value proposition, or the challenging post-COVID environment to define us and limit our possibilities, or we can embrace innovation and opportunity!

And, in turn, we will be a forward-focused institution in our research, teaching, and service.

Our reality is that the speed at which most universities evolve will not be sufficient in fully serving our communities and positively impacting this nation!

It is clear!

We must innovate in order to thrive!

The universities that engage in innovative approaches and visionary changes will remain at the forefront during these challenging times.

I commit that Old Dominion University will be one of those leading institutions!

In order for our efforts to be successful, we must engage the Monarch Nation in its totality in planning and executing a bold and innovative agenda!

We must be innovative in every aspect of our work!

Innovation must be our new normal.

Our success will ultimately be determined by the commitment of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends to think outside of the proverbial box!

For innovation to come to life in our organization, we must be willing to embrace this new normal in higher education.

This will allow us to have meaningful conversations regarding corporate partnership, interdisciplinary programs, and student success in bold and new ways!

In looking to the future, it is important to face our current reality.

There is increased competition from public, private, and for-profit universities.

Remember that the core of innovation is about the process of thinking in new and profound ways to improve results!

So, as we prepare to travel a road of innovation with students at the heart of every decision, we will serve the Commonwealth as a model for creativity, discovery, excellence, and progress with a keen eye toward research, teaching, and service!

In doing so, something special will happen on our campus!

We will transform Old Dominion University.

Together, we will propel Old Dominion University to national and international prominence.

Now, we will encounter challenges.

Collectively, we must face these challenges together.

The changes in higher education are so rapid!

Universities that embrace these significant changes and meet the growing needs of this great country will thrive and those that do not will fade away one by one!

It happens every year all across this nation!

Universities and colleges are closing their doors!

But...I am confident that Old Dominion University will thrive in the future!

We will be a University on the cutting edge.

We will be a University prepared to lead!

Why am I so confident?

Because I have looked into the eyes of our faculty and our staff.

I have witnessed first-hand their passion and perseverance on behalf of this Great University.

I have been moved by each of them telling our story!

In recent months, the Monarch story has been one of great achievement and tremendous progress!

One clear example is our recent designation as one of the nation's top performing research institutions.

Folks, this is just the beginning!

I know that, by working together, we will take Old Dominion University to unprecedented heights!

Today, as I stand before you as the 9th President of Old Dominion University, with a deep level of determination to make a difference in the lives of current and future generations of students.

The enormity of the trust you have instilled in me is my constant companion.

It is present in every action and every decision that I have made and will continue to make on behalf of this University.

I promise to serve Old Dominion University and guide the Monarch Nation by furthering our commitment to civility, inclusion, and respect, which are the hallmarks of this family!

I pledge to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of President in leading this incredible institution each and every day.

It is my individual pledge to the campus!

It is our collective promise to the community!

It is our greatest privilege to serve the Commonwealth!

With the wind at our backs and Monarch momentum in our hearts, we cannot falter, and we will not falter.

Thank you, and GO MONARCHS!