Good Morning! My name is Tatum Pottenger, and I am currently a sophomore here at Davidson.

I want to start off by telling you all a bit about my life growing up as the child of Davidson graduates. When I was a kid, I used to think that “going to college” meant “going to Davidson.” My parents used to talk about their college years, and since they both talked about college in the context of Davidson, I just assumed that “college” and “Davidson” were synonymous. My discovery that high school seniors had a choice of where they wanted to spend the next four years of their higher education, was prompted mostly by the town environment in which I grew up. Being from Durham, North Carolina, my notion of “college” expanded during basketball season to the great institutions of Duke University, UNC Chapel Hill, and finally, my old friend Davidson.

In the first grade, my class made a monthly newspaper. One particular issue, I remember, contained a special sports page, which featured a class-wide poll on which teams the students rooted for in the ACC. Upon discovering this poll after receiving my copy of the paper, I was shocked to discover the results. 10 students cheered for Duke, 6 for UNC, but only 1 cheered for Davidson!…. (I bet you can guess who that 1 student was). I guess my parents’ love for Davidson rubbed off at a young age, because at the age of 6, I was standing proudly by a team that none of my classmates knew existed!

Fast forward to high school: my acceptance to Davidson was met with much familial excitement and 57 likes on my facebook status (not that I was counting). It was also met with a few “are you going to be friends with Steph Curry now?” and “Can you get his autograph for me?” Most exciting, however, were the connections that began to pop up. Here and there, I would get a “oh, you’re going to Davidson? Look for my friend’s daughter so-and-so!” or a “I went to Davidson! Is Professor Epes still there?” Davidson folks began popping up everywhere, and I began to notice more and more that we tend to flock together, like homing pigeons all bound for one home base… I’ve discovered connections through my dental hygienist, buying toothpaste at the grocery store and, most recently, in a J Crew outlet in Mebane, North Carolina…

The point of all of this, is that I have always known that Davidson College is where I was meant to be. Yes, there may have been a period in high school where, out of sheer rebellion, I promised myself I wouldn’t apply here when the time came to think about college. But no amount of teenage rebellion could keep me from the love I have for this school. I don’t know if you’ve known all your life, like me, that you would end up here, or if you just decided four months ago. Regardless of the reason, I am so excited that you all made the decision to become a part of the incredible community of talented, thoughtful and interesting individuals that make up Davidson College.

In closing, I would like to offer one piece of advice (in case you weren’t already over-advised by a hundred different people before you left for school like I was!). This advice, however, is one to remember from the perspective of a student of an alumnus or alumna. Indulge your family members, every so often, in conversation about this special place (even if it does mean listening to another story that begins with “when I was in school…”). Chances are, they’ll feel at least a portion of the tremendous love that I feel for this school. I am so thrilled to be one of the first to welcome you to Davidson College. Standing today before past and future Davidson graduates reminds me that it truly is a great day to be a Wildcat!