

UMKC New Student Convocation
Sunday, August 21, 2011

Getting UMKC Right: Four Habits of Mind and Heart
By Professor Joan V. Gallos

I am honored to have been chosen to represent the distinguished UMKC faculty, and on their behalf I welcome you to campus and to the beginning of a set of experiences that will literally change your life.

I'm not going to bore you with the educational philosophy, developmental psychology, pedagogical strategies, or neuroscience that supports my claim. I am here for 2 reasons: (1) to share the excitement we feel as faculty in playing a part in your transformation, and (2) to help you get on the right road as you begin your glorious developmental journey with us.

Think about it. When you next sit here with your classmates, having followed the bagpiper into this grand hall with its stage party of dignitaries like you see behind me today, it will be your graduation. And when that day arrives – and it will come quickly – you'll be smarter and better prepared for the world of opportunities that lie ahead.

But even more important, if you *do this UMKC thing right*, you'll also arrive at graduation with the capacities to see and live in the world differently and to understand yourself better than you do today – understand your strengths, your true talents, your passions, your values. If you *do this UMKC thing right*, you'll learn to recognize the contributions that are yours alone to make to your profession, your family, your community, the world. And you'll have a diverse network of colleagues and friends from around the world to support you in your efforts.

So how do you do this *UMKC thing right*? Provost Hackett has already given you some sound advice: go to class, study, meet faculty, get involved, make friends, stay focused. But I want to take a different slant at how to get this *UMKC thing right* and it emphasizes an approach to life's journey – 4 habits of the mind and heart you can begin to develop starting today – that will serve you well at UMKC and throughout your life.

With a lot on your mind today, I thought it would be easier for you to remember my sage advice if I gave you an acronym: a simple word you'll be less likely to forget that's formed from the first letter of each of my 4 suggested strategies. Acronym as in AOL (American On-line) or USA (United States of America). My acronym for you this solemn and serious afternoon is BEER.

By your response, it seems as if some of you know the word BEER – one of the world's oldest beverages with a history dating back to the 6th millennium BC that during the Industrial Revolution moved from artisanal manufacture to industrial production now fueling a global brewing industry with annual revenues exceeding \$294.5 billion and dominated by a few multinational companies but leaving room for thousands of smaller producers ranging from brewpubs to regional breweries. BEER

As a mother who just sent her son off to his freshman year after the talk on responsible consumption, somehow I thought BEER would be an easy word for you to remember – and that I could use this opportunity to add my words of caution and responsibility here for those of you away from home for the first time. So let's deconstruct my acronym. BEER.

B is the right place to start since B is a reminder to believe in yourself. If your experiences today are like every other student on day one, you're excited. Maybe a little scared. Probably wondering if you have the right stuff to succeed here, to succeed in college.

I'm here to tell you: *you do* and that you have more capacity to learn and grow than you can ever imagine. *We have chosen each and every one of you* because we know you have the right stuff – and that seated before us are the future leaders of the global world: you are our future doctors, lawyers, CEOs, artists, government officials, healthcare professionals, philosophers, teachers, diplomats, entrepreneurs, musicians, accountants, authors, actors, and more. Believe in your own potential – remind yourself of it when those inevitable doubts crawl in. And they will. Believe in your own potential, and work hard to realize it. Believe in your own potential, and you are unbeatable. B is for believe.

E is for engage. Approach learning like a sport. Be an active learner. Ask questions. Dig into topics. Make note of the subjects that light your fire. Use supports on campus to build your writing skills, study skills, computer skills, language skills, communication skills, presentation skills. Take advantage of all we have to offer, and know that you will learn from plunging into student activities outside the

classroom, too. *Read to remember.* Knowledge is only as helpful as your capacity to use it. I tell my students as they read and study to regularly stop and ask themselves: Why is this information important? What do I want to make sure I remember? How can I use this stuff? Where can I apply it in my life and my work? E is for engage. Engage, and you're unstoppable.

The second E in our acronym is experiment. *Who knows today exactly what they want to do when they graduate? Let's see a show of hands.*

Whether your hand was up or not, remember that college is a time to stretch yourself and to study things you didn't know existed before you arrived at UMKC. As a scholar of leadership effectiveness, for example, I can tell you some of the best ways to learn to lead are by reading fiction – short stories, novels – and by going to plays.

Sounds counter-intuitive, but you'll get an inside-out look at human nature and at why good leadership and management – and the healthy and positive relationships that are essential for both – are so hard. I hope you know UMKC's English faculty and theater offerings are world-class. Take advantage of that. And there's a multitude of research on the links between music and the creativity needed for innovation in every field. We have a world-class conservatory here. Use it. Go to concerts. Study an instrument. You'll be a better scientist, engineer, accountant, doctor, educator, business owner, decision maker for it. The second E is a reminder to experiment. The whole of the university awaits you.

Believe. Engage. Experiment. Research.

Finally R is for research. Do it. Do it formally working with our faculty. The UMKC undergraduate program SEARCH (Students Engaged in Artistic and Academic Research) can help, and there are campus symposia and publications to present the fruits of your labor. Do some research formally through SEARCH or do it informally. Dig into topics that interest you. Explore beyond the requirements. Go the extra mile. Read. We have a world-class library staff who can help you. Work for the joy of knowing and mastering some new understanding, not just to make a grade.

BEER – believe, engage, experiment, research. That's the winning formula for UMKC – and for life! Again, welcome to UMKC. If you do it right, you're in for the time of your life! Onward!