

President Tiefenthaler, thank you so much for your warm welcome. It's been an honor and a pleasure getting to know you over these last few weeks, and I'm extraordinarily glad you're a part of the Colorado College community.

At Oxford University, specifically at New College, which is named so because it was founded in 1379, over 400 years before CC, enormous oak beams, at least 40 feet long, hold up the roof of the massive dining hall. Recently, it was found that the beams had begun to disintegrate: they were filled with beetles.

The college deans were beside themselves: Where, after 400 years, would they find oak beams of the same quality. From a corner of the meeting room, the groundskeeper spoke up. Hundreds of years earlier, he said, the original founders of the college had planted a grove of oak trees; trees that had grown for 400 years, and were exactly the size and caliber needed for the roof.

The original founders had looked ahead 400 years in planning what the college needed. Groundskeepers for hundreds of years had passed down the knowledge, "don't cut those trees, those ones are for the college."

This is well-worn tradition for these sorts of typical, university welcome speeches: the use of thoughtful parables and narratives, usually pertaining to education or personal development. I think this narrative is a particularly good one: that if we approach institutions with thoughtfulness and foresight we can create an environment for sustained success.

My speech today is the 'students' welcome', and it's altogether fitting for such a welcome to discuss how you and I can seize the opportunity this year presents, and build an environment for sustained success. But rather than talking about it in terms of parables, I want to discuss the real, grounded needs and demands of students.

In short, this morning I want to discuss transparency, and why it's the tree that we should plant...

Every freshman class at Colorado College is an incredibly talented and accomplished group of individuals, and the class of 2015 is no exception. Such a talented, smart, and forward-thinking student body deserves to be represented by a student government that is equally as driven to enact student needs on campus and in our community. You deserve a student government that creates an authentic student voice, and represents you like the exceptional individuals you are. This year we will hold ourselves to that high standard.

This year we're going to make every penny student government allocates to groups available on our website; we're going to put all our election data and rules online; we're going to put our meeting minutes online, and we're going to open our doors to anyone who wants to sit in or bring an idea to our meetings.

That's what I mean by transparency: the knowledge that we trust you with everything we do. We can only provoke campus conversations about how to spend our money if we tell students how we spend our money. We can only be a relevant organization if we tell you what we're doing on your behalf. But transparency means more than just letting you see what we do, we also want to come to you.

If your student group requests a meeting with student government, I promise it will happen in a week or less. If your group needs money for legitimate activities, we will show up with the funds. And if you have a concern, no matter how small, about how this college operates, we at student government want to lend you our voice in taking that concern to the administration.

I hope too, that Colorado College can embrace transparency, as a means to clarify both for students and community members what our values are. The CC endowment should be made transparent, because students and their families deserve to know where their money is invested. An honest conversation needs to be had about whether our investments reflect our values as a college, and if they don't, what it would mean to change them.

Additionally, the college should adopt a model where an active CC student is a voting member of the Board of Trustees. This would not only add a valuable perspective to the board, but it would increase the transparency of the board's decisions to the students whom they affect.

Now, what I am not trying to say is that this is the students versus the administration. That's simplistic and wrong; in the end, students and the administration share the same goals in creating an environment for student success. Indeed, President Tiefenthaler has already demonstrated that she shares the priorities of students, from her desire to create the right campus spaces for activities, to her effort reaching out to students during NSO. In my discussions with her, and administrative leaders on campus, it is clear we want the same things.

And so, as we approach this year, we should be asking ourselves certain questions. Do the decisions that we make now have the next 400 years in perspective? Four hundred years from now, what will the students and administrators of CC remember about us? What trees should we be planting this year?