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# Rep. Gary Simrill Encourages Freshmen to Impress Themselves During Convocation Address

## Quick Facts

- Gary Simrill, a Rock Hill Republican who has represented District 46 since 1993, shared his thoughts with incoming freshmen at the academic year's first ceremony on Aug. 25
- Faculty, staff and more than 1,000 freshmen participated in Convocation.
- Following Convocation, Acting President Debra Boyd and husband Warren led the traditional Blue Line to the community picnic on the front lawn.



Rep. Gary Simrill

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Attending college is a great discovery of not only who you are, but who you aren't, observed Winthrop University's **Convocation keynote speaker Gary Simrill '91**.

The Rock Hill Republican who has represented **District 46** since 1993 shared his thoughts with incoming freshmen at the academic year's first ceremony on Aug. 25. Classes started the same day.

"Someone asked me if college made me smart," he told a packed audience in Byrnes Auditorium. "I said 'no' it only sharpened the skills I already had much like a pencil. The shaving of the wood (from the knowledge gained in college) produces a point and that lead point is used to write your future."

He and other speakers seized on the "**Team Winthrop**" concept that it takes professors, friends, family and community members to help students realize their potential.

For Simrill, it was Debbie Garrick '87, '89, a long-time Winthrop employee leaving this month after 19 years, who helped him. "She taught me that the biggest impediment to success wasn't others, but it was me," said Simrill, who now owns Carolina Motorworks. "Don't try to impress others but instead impress yourself. Don't follow in others' footsteps - step beyond them."

Others welcoming new students to Winthrop and Rock Hill were **Acting President Debra Boyd**, Board of Trustees Chair Kathy Bigham '73, Mayor Doug Echols '77, **Faculty Chair John Bird** and Council of Student Leader Chair Ian Deas.

Bird implored the **more than 1,000 freshmen** to show up, keep up and to become a nerd. "In college, nerds rule," the English professor said in leading a nerds cheer. "Join us. Be a nerd."

In his greeting, Echols said that many Winthrop students find Rock Hill and the surrounding area so attractive they end up staying here after college, a relationship that not only is good for the city but also for the ones who choose to call Rock Hill home after graduation.

Bigham told the new students that she sat where they were many years ago as a Winthrop freshman. Her advice: Look to each other for help and learn to trust one another. "For certain, some of these

students will become your lifelong friends,” she said. “Everyone here is committed to helping you succeed.”

After Convocation, Boyd and her husband, Warren, led students outside to a community picnic on the campus front lawn in what is the traditional **Blue Line**. Dozens of organizations, churches and clubs members greeted new and returning students and urged them to get involved in the Winthrop experience.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu).

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