Good morning fellow Tar Heels, and welcome to Chapel Hill!

I am so excited you all are here today and I am so happy I get to be one of the first people to welcome you to the Carolina community.

My name is Will Leimenstoll and I’m the Student Body President here at UNC.

It wasn’t too long ago that I was anxiously sitting in your shoes on a very hot summer day and to be totally honest at the time I was wondering whether this was the right place for me and was already thinking about where else I could pursue my academic goals. I wasn’t initially excited to come here and I wouldn’t be surprised if there are a couple of you who are wondering whether you made the right choice too. It wasn’t until I moved into my first year residence hall that I fell head over heels in love with this place and I want to assure that no matter what path you took to get here, you’re absolutely going to love it too. Today as a rising senior, I would give anything to be an incoming first year at Carolina all over again. I could not be more jealous of you all who are just embarking on the wonderful adventure of being a Carolina student.

You’ve all worked incredibly hard to get to where you are today and I know that you all are going to do amazing things these next four years and beyond. At Carolina you’ll get a world-class education, the opportunity to follow your extracurricular passions, and you’ll have so much fun that the time will fly by faster than you can imagine. The link that knits these together into what we call the Carolina Way is you, and the people sitting around you. The people here are one of a kind. Nowhere else on Earth do you find such a diverse, driven, intelligent, and compassionate group of people. Carolina students push each other to excel both in and outside the classroom, and it’s my job as Student Body President to do what I can to support you all in such endeavors.

As part of that job I have a few pieces of advice for you as you start this year:

1. Come in with an open-mind. If someone had told me 3 years ago that I would study abroad in South Africa, join a fraternity, change my major, be part of a snowball fight with hundreds of fellow students, or become student body president, I wouldn’t have believed them, but all these things have come true thanks to Carolina. Be open to trying new things because you don’t want to miss any of the unique opportunities that come your way as a Tar Heel.

2. Invest in the people here. Ask anyone what their favorite thing about Carolina is and I can almost guarantee to you that they’ll say it’s the people. So make time for late night study breaks, or spontaneous trips to The Yogurt Pump, otherwise known as YoPo, with friends. Don’t be afraid to strike up conversations with students you don’t know in the Pit or the dining hall, chances are that person is pretty great. This goes for professors too – they really love talking with students and often can provide a lot of academic as well as life wisdom. Don’t be afraid if they’re a little intimidating in a large class, go to their office hours and they’ll be excited to get to know you!

3. Get involved on campus! I have learned so much and gotten to know so many people through my extracurricular activities here at Carolina. Whether it’s student government, the Campus Y, a club sport, campus ministry, or Greek life these groups can deeply
enrich your experience at Carolina. Between FallFest, Week of Welcome, and learning from fellow students you’ll get plenty of opportunities to get involved. In fact, you have the opportunity to get involved tonight at Late Night Carolina where you can get to know your classmates while helping to package meals for Stop Hunger Now, a great organization working to reduce global hunger.

4. Find time to do things that make you happy and know that no one can be good at everything all the time. You can’t bury your head in pre-med textbooks all day every day; sometimes you need to take a break. For me I’ve done this by playing intramural soccer with friends every semester. I love playing soccer but I’m awful at it. During my illustrious three year soccer career I have scored once, and unfortunately it was against my own team… However these soccer games have been some of my most enjoyable college memories.

5. Finally, watch out on the bricks around campus, they’ll trip you up!

I hope this advice gets you off to a great start, and again congratulations, you made it to UNC! Enjoy orientation, get to know your orientation leaders and fellow students, and get excited for a life-changing four years here at Carolina!