



ECKERD COLLEGE

CEREMONY OF LIGHTS

Presentation of the Class

John Sullivan

Vice President for Enrollment Management

August 14, 2026
McArthur Gymnasium

Good evening and welcome to Eckerd College. Parents, grandparents, siblings, supporters, faculty, staff, current students, and friends of Eckerd, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you here to introduce our new first-year and transfer students.

We began the journey that brought us here together long ago. In fact, the student who engaged with us the earliest did so by visiting campus as a

walk-in over 5 years ago on July 13, 2021—and the rest of you eventually followed. After that, we snail-mailed you, emailed you, called you, texted you, zoomed you, and met with you virtually and in person during high school visits, college fairs, and interviews. At the same time you were following us on Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and Tik Tok. Through it all, we asked you to approach the college search process a bit differently. We asked you to put aside magazine and online rankings and replace that method by looking for a place that fits you. We asked you to look past the fact that there is no ivy on our buildings, but to understand that serious academic work does take place where you can still have a little time for the beach. We asked you to embrace our unique 4-1-4 academic calendar, which starts today with Autumn Term. Through it all, we asked you to **THINKOUTSIDE**.

This is a day that the faculty and staff have planned for with great anticipation. We recognize that there are a range of emotions that are being felt here today—happiness, sadness, excitement, trepidation, fear, and great confidence in knowing you made the perfect choice. For some, you have experienced all of these emotions in the last half hour! It's OK, though; those emotions are to be expected, and Autumn Term is structured

to provide a thorough and gradual adjustment to college life and the academic experience. The student activators, peer mentors, faculty, and staff are here to assist—be sure to ask them questions and participate fully in and out of the classroom.

Members of this year's class are an impressive group of scholars and leaders.

They have joined us from:

Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado,
Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa,
Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan,
Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New
Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma,
Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South
Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington,
West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

As well as Argentina, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the the United Kingdom

This geographic diversity is a distinctive factor of the Eckerd College experience. In fact, the average distance the new students traveled to attend Eckerd is just over 1,000 miles.

Your strength of character, your commitment to others, and your approach to becoming an educated person will enrich you and Eckerd in numerous ways. We look forward to your contributions and to your membership in our community.

Would the new students please rise as you are able?

President Annarelli, Vice Presidents Wooley and Sanfilippo, Dean Vincent, ECOS representatives Izzy Williams and Miranda Tapia, Rabbi Rosenthal, Rev. Galloway, faculty, and staff, it is my great honor to present the newest members of the Eckerd College community.