IAN SCHNEE ADDRESSES THE NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION

Submitted by Kate Goldyn on September 29, 2020 - 10:20am

On September 27, 2020, Ian Schnee helped welcome new students to the University of Washington on behalf of faculty as part of this year's livestreamed New Student Convocation. A 2020 Distinguished Teaching Award winner, Schnee was asked to speak because, as University Marshal Joseph Janes explained, “he is not only a student favorite, but has dedicated himself to incorporating new teaching technologies into his classrooms and he has proven to be a valuable mentor to our faculty, particularly during the current pandemic.”

In his address, Ian acknowledged apprehension that new students might be feeling as they start university this fall, but he encouraged them to find the excitement as well. To empower students to feel confident in their ability to learn in their current circumstances, he shared studies on what leads to effective learning and dispelled some common misconceptions.

For example, he noted that once of the most popular study techniques reported by students – re-reading and highlighting texts – is actually not a very effective strategy for deep learning. Rather, he explained that techniques requiring more active tasks (like quizzing with flashcards or answering new questions on a given theme) lead to better outcomes.

Acknowledging additional restrictions on time and energy due to the pandemic, Ian assured students that they didn't need to spend more time studying, but rather to take advantage of opportunities to try things and potentially to be wrong, in order to engage in active learning – opportunities often presented during scheduled class time by professors, and not necessarily requiring extra time outside of class.

He modeled this approach during his address by presenting students with questions and having them think about them and discuss their hypotheses with others rather than just passively listening.

We join Ian in welcoming new Huskies to UW and encouraging all students to embrace new challenges in their virtual classes as they are able. Using evidence-based learning techniques, students can make the most of the time and energy they have in order to succeed in their studies.

Watch Ian's full address here.