

Elizabeth Loizeaux  
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs  
Professor of English

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Friends, family, members of the class of 2022: welcome to BU! We've been looking forward to this day, and, like you, have been busy preparing--and now you're here!

I am honored to have the opportunity to talk with you today. It's my job, of course, to offer you more of what you've been getting a lot of lately: Advice. With a capital A. So here goes.

You are the first students coming into BU's new general education program, the BU Hub. With a wink and a nod at Boston's nickname, it is so-called because it defines the undergraduate experience you share with all of your classmates, regardless of school, college or major. The Hub of your college career. While you will each set out on your own path of exploration and discovery, you will ALL develop the BU Hub's six essential capacities— *Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation; Scientific and Social Inquiry; Quantitative Reasoning; Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship; Communication*; and the set of social and intellectual skills we call the *Intellectual Toolkit*. The Hub is new, innovative and forward-looking. If you use its opportunities well, it will prepare you to be lifelong learners and leaders in our often confusing, rapidly evolving, interconnected, globalized world.

How so? The Hub promotes **connections** among fields of study and across your experience as a student—you will take courses that integrate several Hub areas; you will pursue the Hub in your major and out, across all of your four years, and not just in courses but outside the classroom in co-curricular, experiential learning opportunities and “Life Skills” offerings. The Hub emphasizes **higher-order thinking**: interpretation, inquiry, reasoning, all essential to thriving in your personal and civic lives as well as in your professional life. The Hub is **global** in orientation, while being grounded in your experience here in this city, this place: you can go abroad and do the Hub, you can go out into the City of Boston and do the Hub. And while the Hub looks forward, it is animated by the vision of BU’s first president, William Fairfield Warren, who aimed to unite the **liberal arts and sciences with the professions**, a commitment that has defined BU and that endures today.

*You* will choose your pathway through the Hub, and *how* you choose your way will make all the difference. I ask you to pause for a moment to consider the notion of “liberal education” that the Hub embodies, an education that derives from uniting the liberal arts and sciences with the professions. The word “liberal” here does *not* mean “liberal” in the narrow, American, political sense of a particular ideological position—in fact, quite the opposite. It derives from the Latin word “liber,” meaning “free, unrestricted” that is embedded in “Greek and Roman Stoic notions of an education that,” as legal scholar Martha Nussbaum writes, “is 'liberal' in that it liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom”<sup>1</sup>—a mind thus free to pursue ideas, free to think broadly across the whole gamut of

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<sup>1</sup> *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 8.

opinions, a mind free to inquire without restriction by politics, custom, prevailing norms: an independent mind. It implies that other meaning of liberal—ample, generous, as in a liberal helping of something—generosity of thought and feeling; generosity of spirit toward others and oneself.

As you pursue the Hub, look to making choices that will free you, that will expand your generosity. Grab hold of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity the Hub offers you! Don't play it safe! Resist the Amazonification of our lives—if you like this, then you'll like this. *I* like to click on those cute dresses that pop up on the side of my screen. It's seductive--quite pleasant, really, to be constantly pleased by what's put before you--but why let *other* people curate your experiences, choose your life for you? Resist, I say again! Be contrarian, even, or especially, with yourself. Try things you think you will *NOT* like. Take courses and talk to people you *don't* understand. This is the specific challenge the Hub throws down to you in areas like "Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meanings," "Individual in Community," "Quantitative Reasoning 2," "Ethical Reasoning." If you are always in your comforting social groups, in your familiar intellectual spaces, on your clear path, you will never, *ever* understand yourself because you will lack experience that pushes you out beyond what you already know about yourself, your strengths, and your limits. You will have nothing with which to test yourself to discover what you're really capable of, how far you can stretch your boundaries, how much of the world you can see.

Socrates so famously said that the unexamined life is not worth living. If you embrace what the BU Hub embodies, *use* its possibilities to expand your scope, you will acquire the

intellectual, emotional and social wherewithall—the knowledge and the ways of thinking--  
sufficient for living a full, rich, well-examined life that will keep unfolding before you for  
many, many years. *Today*, try something you think you may not like! With the faculty and  
staff of BU beside you, pointing out doors to open, sharing your excitement, go in freedom  
and generosity. Go! Open the world wide! Create your own life! Thank you.