

DU president encourages healthy campus relationships to preserve personal, school brands

Kimbrough makes 10th freshman class address as he plans departure in spring 2022

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NEW ORLEANS (October 10, 2021) – The Dillard family must hold its members accountable for their actions and collectively share successes and failures rather than damaging both your personal brand and the school’s, according to Dr. Walter Kimbrough, Dillard president.

Kimbrough made the comments to faculty, staff and students during Convocation in Lawless Chapel on Aug. 19 as a welcome address to the Class of 2025.

He noted his first such DU address was in 2012, when he took the helm on campus. Kimbrough has announced plans to leave Dillard in spring 2022 after 10 years, but he said, “Dillard will always be my home.”

“Whatever we do at DU, we have to balance family and accountability,” he said – a difficult task. Even so, he said, three areas of aspiration are involved:

- Respected and responsible elders.
- An active and authentic love.
- Proud and protective members.

Freshman adjusting to college life have to understand the importance of respecting their elders because they have the students’ best interests at heart, he said.

“You might not like what they say, but respect them...develop a relationship.”

Most importantly, Kimbrough said, is understanding the need to “amplify you” and build your brand. Too often, in the country and at Dillard, conflicts are handled on social media rather than face-to-face, he said.

“Healthy families don’t hurt each other,” he said.

Negative attacks on social media can hurt the student and the school, he warned. Students often don't realize the Library of Congress has a record of every single tweet sent, and what you say early in life can follow you with disastrous results, he said. For example, early this year, Alexi McCammond had to resign her newly appointed position as editor of Teen Vogue after racist and homophobic tweets surfaced that she had made a decade ago.

Kimbrough noted that a recent research study of college tweets ranked Dillard No. 6 of "most derogatory" campuses for use of the "N-word" and "B-word." "That revealed who we are," he said. "Think about these things." He added, "We have to work on being a healthy family. We check each other privately" to "inoculate against cultural pessimism."

Students must love themselves first before seeking love from the university, he said; otherwise, Dillard can't make a person whole and happy. "Bigger things bind us than separate us," he said.