





Over 150 students and faculty gathered on August 24 for the Honors Program Fall Opening Convocation. A record number of new freshmen attended, eager to immerse themselves in the Honors Program and begin their academic careers in earnest. This year's Convocation was held in the University Center's Magnolia Room for the first time. Both new and returning students were greeted by members of the Honors Student Association, who signed them in and enticed everyone to join HSA. Jennifer Stakich and Chelsie Norton kept the flow of students moving through the check-in line while Amanda Semetko, this year's graduate assistant, captured the entire event on her camera. At 7 pm exactly, Dr. Nikolova took the podium and greeted everyone present. After giving a brief history of the Honors Program's achievements from last year, she issued somewhat of a challenge for this year's students: keep the Honors Program spirit alive through projects, community service, and undergraduate research! Dr. Schloss, President of VSU, gave a brief welcome to all those present and turned the floor over to Dr. Karla Hull, Interim Assistant Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, for some opening remarks. Dr. Connie Richards, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, encouraged the students to think about undergraduate research and national scholarships (such as the Rhodes, Fulbright, and Truman awards), saying, "VSU Honors Program students have the ability to be named as a Rhodes Scholar or a Truman Award winner." After encouraging everyone to apply for these prestigious awards, she then introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. John Dunn of the History Department. Dr. Dunn was not a typical keynote speaker; in fact, he represented the individuality and creativity that the Honors Program encourages and nurtures. Various students referred to him as a "modern-day Indiana Jones" on more than one occasion; with his fedora, he more than looked the part! Most importantly, however, Dr. Dunn presented a passionate view of his favorite subject and inspired students to research something they love. His address "Adventures in Research," or, as he labeled it, "How Researching the Egyptian Army in the 1870s Leads to a Burlesque Show in New York City," was both fascinating and amusing. Tracing his steps through London, England and Cairo, Egypt proved to students that research can be enjoyable and educational at the same time. Dr. Dunn emphasized the importance of undergraduate and graduate research to the Honors students, something Dr. Nikolova wholeheartedly agrees with! At the conclusion of his speech, Dr. Dunn offered this piece of advice to the students: "Get along with foreigners who conduct business differently, and you'll get some cake." A tasty prospect indeed, Dr. Dunn!