Henry Louis Gates Jr., professor of English at Harvard University, was named the 16th president of the University of Pennsylvania.

In a commencement address at the University of Pennsylvania on May 17, Gates said: "To the newest members of the Penn family, I offer my warmest congratulations on your achievements. I believe that you are all destined for greatness."

Gates, who served as director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African-American Research at Harvard University, said he was honored to have been chosen to lead Penn, which has a long history of excellence in education and research.

"Penn is a university with a rich tradition of excellence, innovation and impact," Gates said. "I am thrilled to be part of this community and look forward to working with my colleagues and students to continue to build on Penn's legacy of excellence.

"I am committed to working with the University community to foster a culture of inclusion and diversity, and to ensure that Penn is a place where all students can thrive and succeed," Gates added.

Gates, who earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1980 and a master's degree from Oxford University in 1983, has served as a professor of English at Harvard since 1984.

He has also served on the board of directors of the MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation, and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Gates is the son of Harvard University President Henry Louis Gates Sr., who served as president from 1971 to 1983.

In his address to the graduating class, Gates encouraged the students to "never take for granted the opportunities that have been afforded to you." He also urged them to "be open to new ideas and experiences, and never be afraid to fail."