



2014 FIAT LUX ADDRESS

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Good Afternoon and welcome to the 2014 Fiat Lux Address. I would like to thank you for taking the time to join me today and welcome those joining us online as we stream this address to our northern campuses.

Wow - what a difference a year can make. Last fall we were dealing with a 7.3 per cent cut to our provincial operating grant and as difficult as it was to navigate our way through the challenge, we remained optimistic that the U of L would emerge from the challenge in a strong position. The revised budget processes and the new Budget Advisory Committees helped us but most importantly our collective efforts with some shared pain and sacrifice saw us through. I would like to thank everyone at this university for their, perseverance and patience.

I also believe what helped us through was our firm commitment to the values and principles of our university. They provided us guideposts and focus. Last fall we launched Destination 2020, a new strategic plan for the University of Lethbridge, a plan guided by a new vision but rooted in our enduring values. This vision sets us on a path to realizing our full potential.

Despite our budget challenges, the Five Strategic Directions of the plan and our foundational values empowered us to accomplish a lot this past year. Many initiatives are underway at the University. Some were initiated in past Fiat Lux addresses, others introduced in the Strategic Plan and yet others are initiatives conceived and led by members of our community. Regardless of where they started, all point us in the direction outlined in the plan. All point us to affirming our values.

I would like to highlight a few and provide you with some insights on the path ahead.

Liberal Education Revitalization

Building on the 2012 Fiat Lux Address by Provost Andy Hakin, a team was formed last fall to review and make recommendations for the revitalization and growth of the Liberal Education commitment at the U of L.

Led by Shelly Wismath, the task team included Shelley Scott, Jan Newberry, Bryan Kolb and Heather Mirau. Their findings strongly reconfirm the value and commitment to liberal education at the U of L. They do however illustrate a general lack of understanding of the liberal education principles by many. Future University wide consultation will

lead to recommendations and an action plan for increasing the awareness and understanding of liberal education across the U of L campuses. I look forward to the revitalization of liberal education in our University and see it as a priority. A proposal for revitalization is expected later this fall.

A special thank you goes out to Shelly and her team for the extensive work they have done this past year.

FNMI Initiatives Update

The initiative to increase the participation of FNMI peoples in all aspects of the University of Lethbridge community is also gaining momentum.

Last fall the *Blackfoot and First Nations, Metis and Inuit Protocol Handbook* was approved by GFC. The Protocol Handbook guides University faculty and staff hosting university events in how to recognize Blackfoot and FNMI cultures and on hosting Blackfoot or other FNMI peoples at the University of Lethbridge.

Another highlight of this initiative was the recent signing of the first official Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Lethbridge and Red Crow Community College on June 11th. This was a historic event held at Red Crow Community College and commits both of our institutions to promote and collaborate on academic programming, research and innovation, and community service.

A recent philanthropic gift from ConocoPhillips Canada has supported orientation activities for FNMI students this fall. The gift will also enable an expanded Native Awareness Week, and the development of an inaugural First Nations Graduation Pow-Wow at the University in 2015.

Another key recommendation of the FNMI report was to create a Gathering Place on campus for FNMI students. Last fall, the Paterson Centre was designated as the interim Gathering Place and renovations were made to the facility over the summer. We are planning for phase 2 of the Destination project to provide the permanent home for a gathering space to be housed in University Hall.

Internationalization Strategy

Another important initiative currently underway is an internationalization strategy for the University of Lethbridge. A team was struck last fall to review and make recommendations to address the need to better coordinate international efforts at the U of L.

The proposal establishes a system for coordination and communication, it provides a comprehensive focus and strategy for international efforts across the university at all levels and at all campuses, and it increases service to those planning an international experience.

I would like to thank all of those involved in this work to date, a restructuring of international activities is now underway in accordance with this strategic planning model. University of Lethbridge International has been established to facilitate, coordinate, promote and monitor international activities. Paul Pan has been appointed the Acting Executive Director of this group that will ensure the successful development and implementation of an integrated and collaborative internationalization plan.

This year we were able to establish the President's Grant for International Community Engagement thanks to an anonymous donation. The award provides up to \$5,000 to students to spend an extended period of time in a paid or volunteer role in a developing country. This year:

Fourth-year political science student Brandon McNally spent the summer in Nepal, where he worked for a non-government organization called Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA).

A group of nursing students completed their final clinical practice course at Mulago Hospital in Kampala, Uganda.

And Sara Bieniada, an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Management, will go Burkina Faso, Africa, this month, where she will teach English as a second language.

This program is beneficial on so many levels. It is designed not only to give our students the incredible opportunity to travel abroad and do meaningful work, but it specifically calls for their projects to create lasting partnerships that will strengthen international networks and create a lasting effect of their visit.

New Programs

It is important to mention several new programs that have been introduced this past year or are forthcoming this year:

The Bachelor of Fine Arts (in Native American Art) was introduced. This unique and historically significant offering reflects the importance of aboriginal art and culture in our region and across North America.

Enrolment in nursing and education continues to be strong and both programs are at capacity this year. Next fall, the Faculty of Health Sciences will admit students to its new aboriginal health major and will be offering a bachelor of therapeutic recreation in Fall 2016. A new masters of nursing has also been approved and will be offered in Fall 2015.

The Faculty of Education has admitted 36 more students into its two-year program, making for more than 250 students overall. The faculty will also be introducing a new PhD in Education with intake beginning July 2016.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences plans to restart its first year Engineering Transfer program next year. The Faculty is also planning to pilot a special liberal education program focused on water, sustainability and equality for a select cohort of students in 2015.

The Faculty of Management launched the Executive in Residence program last year that brought Silicon Valley entrepreneur, executive and alumnus Anil Pereira (BMgt '87) to our campuses to share his extensive knowledge and insight with our students.

And, our Provost's office is working on 2 new dual credit courses with local high schools.

People Plan

Sam Smith, the first president of the University of Lethbridge, said it best “Our people define our University and are our greatest strength” - I have always reinforced the importance of this statement and over the past couple of years a campus-wide committee has been working on the development of a People Plan.

The People Plan will examine what support mechanisms currently exist for our employees and what new alternatives can be implemented to ensure continued support. A confidential, online employee survey will be conducted in November to identify areas for improvement and areas where we excel, gather information on priorities, collect feedback on the working environment and provide a benchmark for future evaluation. Please participate in the survey, we need to hear from you. We want to differentiate our university from others, to be among the best places where people want to work, educate, learn, conduct research and engage in creative activity – and we can't do that without your feedback.

Enrolment

This fall we welcomed 8,224 students to our campuses in Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton. Graduate student, international undergraduate and FNMI registrations are up this year. Despite this, enrolment continues to be a concern at the University of Lethbridge as we are reporting a 2.0 per cent decline from last year. Although we have seen a trend in increased credit hours year by year for the last three years, this is the fourth consecutive year our fall enrolment, based on final headcounts, has declined.

This is a concern for all of us. Enrolment at this university is something each and every one of us need to take responsibility for. We must do all we can to ensure that the University of Lethbridge is the institution of choice for those prospective students here in our own back yard. We must ensure that we offer a welcoming, supportive environment and rigorous academic programs of the highest quality to attract not only those local students but students from throughout Alberta, Canada and the world. All of our individual and collective goals are predicated on a solid base of undergraduate and graduate students. We cannot afford to see these numbers drop again.

We need to continue to build on that promise we make to students every year - to do our best so they can be their best; to build the facilities and acquire the technology that creates an environment for discovery; and to foster the exploration and the inquiry that excites and ignites learning.

And so many new initiatives do illustrate our commitment to this promise, and our retention rate illustrates this as we are up over 6% in continuing students. The new two-year Banner revitalization project will streamline business processes to improve the use of the Banner System across all units; the new student portal centralizes access for students and their information needs, the welcome week of activities including our new commencement ceremony involved nearly every department and administrative unit to introduce new students to our campuses; our facilities teams have been working tirelessly on our campus structures - upgrading our patios, sidewalks, parking lots and manicuring our campus lawns and tree groves.

Thank you all for your efforts. I truly believe we provide a student experience second to none at this University and we need to continue to ensure students are here to experience it.

Destination Project

One particular project that is gaining quite a bit of attention lately is the Destination Project.

As you know the first phase of this project, the science and academic building, received a significant investment from the Government of Alberta earlier this year. KPMB/Stantec Architects are leading the design process for the new science and academic building and the new energy centre. Several superweeks of design activities have guided the planning process to date.

The Integrated Design process is the foundation for the framework that will guide the planning and construction for the project. Several key themes have evolved from discussions. Creating a supportive environment, creating a transdisciplinary environment, sustainability, campus and community connectivity, and signature architecture, have guided the decision making process.

I hope you were able to take part in the design presentation last week, if not a public presentation is taking place tonight at the Penny Building at 7p.m. We really need your feedback on the three building massing options located north and west of University Hall.

The spirit of “imagining the possibilities” has remained at the heart of what we do here at the U of L and we need to continue this practice as it will shape what the institution will become over the next 50 years.

The Year Ahead

For a year that started out with us fairly pre-occupied with budget concerns, we kept focused on our path forward. A path guided by our values, priorities and our strategic plan.

As I prepare for my second term as president I have been giving a lot of thought to what the next five years might look like. With a new signature building in the works, a facility that will not only change the face of our campus, but the way we conduct research and teaching here at the U of L; a 50th Anniversary in 2017, an opportunity to not only celebrate the milestone, but to engage our communities in advocacy and continued support; and the most significant fundraising campaign in our history getting underway – there is much to do!

Much of my time needs to be spent on ensuring these initiatives are successful. I see much of my work ahead focused on external advocacy. I need to work with donors, government, external agencies like AUCC, and funding agencies to help us achieve our institutional goals. We saw how easily our budgets could be reduced. That tells me that much work needs to be done to ensure that the public and government truly understands the value of this university to the community and that better appreciation of the contributions our faculty, our students and our staff make to creating a better society. Universities are fundamental to a modern society and I still see much work that remains to be done to better tell this story.

SSHRC Initiative

We haven't talked much about phase two of the Destination Project, the revitalization of University Hall. This will be a significant re-investment in the Social Sciences, the Humanities and the Fine Arts at this University.

Building upon Erikson's original vision for creating space that reflected the ethos of liberal education, this renovation will facilitate our progress towards becoming an increasingly competitive comprehensive university by providing a space for interdisciplinary research on people, culture, and society. Our plan is to support and promote Social Sciences and Humanities research in part by establishing a dedicated *place* for it, to create community by physically bringing together existing research partnerships and fostering new and emerging collaborations.

We ARE a Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution (CARI) – all disciplines define our strength. We need a commitment by the institution to bring more attention to the Social Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts

achievement. We need to invest in all of our scholars, we will work to secure funding across all disciplines. As a CARI institution we need to continue to set ourselves apart from our competitors and align with our peers.

It goes without saying that high impact research across many disciplines continues to be achieved at our institution in the absence of significant funding support, and this is especially true in the social sciences and humanities, where scholars consistently produce high profile research. While we will always support and celebrate this culture of scholarship, we cannot embrace it as our only means of success. As we confirm our place as one of Alberta's four CARI institutions we must also acknowledge the external agencies and organizations that reflect our impact at the national level. Canada's TriCouncil Research program is the benchmark for research excellence; success on the TriCouncil stage confirms peer-reviewed success on the national stage. Moreover, much of the operational infrastructure for research is determined in ratio to our success in Tri-Council grant competitions. Directly, the number of Canada Research Chairs we are allocated as well as our funding envelope for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation program are both determined based on our success at the TriCouncil level. Indirectly, TriCouncil success is used as a measurement by other funding agencies about the capacity and capability of an institution, and a tremendous amount of external resources are tied to success at this level.

Our success in CIHR is growing and we continue to hold strong in the NSERC portfolio. Success in the SSHRC portfolio though has been challenging. Based on national success scores, which hover around 20%, SSHRC is arguably the toughest competition in which to mark success. I firmly believe though that we have what it takes to elevate our profile across all portfolios. We have world-renowned scholars, we have some of the country's brightest minds in our Canada Research Chairs, and we have a cohort of exciting young scholars who are all poised to contribute to the vibrancy of research and creative activity in Canada. Looking forward, I commit to continued support across all disciplines.

50 By 50

One way to illustrate that support is through Research Chairs. Research Chairs are one of the means we are achieving our realization as a comprehensive university. High profile academic appointments enable the University of Lethbridge to attract and retain accomplished and promising scholars to lead the research programs that confirm our strengths and shape our future. The University of Lethbridge currently has 32 Research Chair or professorship appointments, sponsored through external granting agency support, through institutional operating budget allocations or through private philanthropic or industry support.

All Research Chair appointments at the University of Lethbridge have played a vital role in helping us achieve our current benchmark and status amongst Canada's most influential research institutions. In the last year alone we have announced 8 new chairs.

Canada Research Chairs **Kristine Alexander** and **Locke Spencer**; CAIP Chairs

Majid Mohajerani and **Nahal Thakor**; AIHS Translational Health Chair in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing **Cheryl Currie**; Alberta Gambling Research Institute Chair **Darren Christensen**; AITF Strategic Chair in (RNA) Bioengineering **H.J. Wieden**; Emmy Droog Professorship in Complementary and Alternative Health Care **Brenda Leung**.

To help ensure our continued hold amongst Canada's top-tier research institutions, but also to recognize and to celebrate the outstanding scholarship of our existing faculty, the University of Lethbridge intends to increase the number of research chair appointments at our institution. The goal is 50 Research Chairs by our 50th Anniversary. With 32 current (or pending) Research Chairs, 18 new appointments are needed to achieve the 50 by 50 goal.

As the first step toward achieving this goal, I am pleased to announce that up to **five** new University of Lethbridge Board of Governors Research Chairs will be appointed this academic year, and I anticipate that a *Call for Nominations* will be released in the coming weeks. Our Board of Governors Research Chair program has been updated to align with the structure of the Canada Research Chair program and to advance our institutional Strategic Research Plan. Our intentions are to invest in our existing faculty, to recognize excellence across all disciplines, and to grow our graduate programs.

It is important to note that we will endeavor to achieve the goal through a combination of external agency and internal support mechanisms. The 50 by 50 is an **aspirational goal**; we will not compromise credibility to attain this aspiration. In fact, by continuing to use the Canada Research Program as our guide for selecting new internal appointments, we will continue to uphold the standards for excellence that are reflected in our current Board of Governors Chair appointments.

One vacancy that currently exists is the Potato Growers of Alberta Chair. This summer we announced a \$1 million gift from the Potato Growers of Alberta (PGA), McCain Foods, ConAgra Lamb Weston and Cavendish Farms to establish a Chair in potato science and we are working hard to match these funds as well.

Agriculture Strategy

Southern Alberta has a proud and rich heritage of agricultural production. Today, Albertans employ advanced practices to produce crops and livestock products of world renown, despite our challenging semi-arid landscape. As global food demand increases, the need for Alberta agriculture is becoming stronger than ever. To take advantage of this opportunity, however, there is a critical need for innovative agricultural research and data-driven agribusiness.

U of L faculty have expertise in a range of fields connected to agriculture, including agricultural biotechnology, remote sensing, agricultural economics and management. We offer our students both direct entry and post-diploma programs in Agricultural Studies, and we have an increasing number of graduate students in agriculture-related fields. We are, thus, delighted to announce our plans to create a new Centre for Agricultural Research and Agribusiness Innovation, which will build upon these successes to enhance research and training in agriculture.

Equally exciting were two important new investments in agriculture at the University of Lethbridge. In June, Cor Van Raay provided \$5 million to launch the Southern Alberta Agribusiness Program at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College. This will facilitate an agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship program here at the U of L, as well as funding for enhanced academic programming and endowed student awards. This was followed by a \$1 million investment by the Potato Growers and Producers of Alberta.

These investments will stimulate agricultural research and agribusiness at our new Centre, which aims to prepare graduates to develop the scientific and business solutions that are needed to meet the demands of a growing global population, while creating new economic opportunities in Alberta, Canada and beyond.

Collectively, these initiatives will make the University of Lethbridge a leader in agricultural education and research.

THINCC

Our commitments to liberal education, undergraduate student research, and co-operative education opportunities all provide a rich environment for the successful development of a generation of innovative thinkers and entrepreneurs who are poised to respond to and drive change.

Our students are well prepared academically and have demonstrated a capacity to innovate and discover in our laboratories and classrooms. To make the most of their liberal education, we need to provide them with the tools they need to take advantage of emerging business opportunities and develop solutions to address our social and economic challenges.

Toward this end, the University will continue to develop a concept introduced as THINC. It will be a practical and hands-on academic experience that represents our institutional commitment to support innovative thinking and entrepreneurial skill development amongst our students. It is an initiative that will provide an immersive learning experience to equip U of L students to launch ideas into action; an incubator for student innovations and entrepreneurial aspirations.

It is perhaps another modern way to express the value of a liberal education.

50th Anniversary Initiatives

I have alluded to our future many times already and have mentioned the University's 50th Anniversary that is fast approaching in 2017. This will be a pivotal milestone for our university, a time to pay tribute to our past and look to our future with great optimism. A 50th Anniversary committee has been struck to encourage and enable a range of activities to not only commemorate and celebrate the founding of our University but to create a lasting legacy that will benefit those who follow us.

The 50th anniversary gives us the opportune time to reflect on the people that brought this University to where it is today. Through their foresight and perseverance, we have been entrusted with one of Canada's finest institutions of higher learning. All of the initiatives I have outlined today – both those fully matured and those still fledgling will be among our bequests to the stewards of the University of Lethbridge who will follow us.

We have focus because the strategic priorities we developed drive us forward and the values that established this University continue to guide us today:

1. We will excel as a comprehensive university
2. We will inspire and support student potential
3. We will promote access to quality, affordable post-secondary education
4. We will build internal community and enhance relationships with external communities
5. We will enhance the sustainability of the University

We are a community that fosters an atmosphere of discovery, a welcoming place where students, faculty and staff have the freedom to think, create, and explore together. People are the essential resource of our institution; *you* define our university and are our greatest strength.

Thank you again for your continued commitment to the University of Lethbridge.