

Address to the South Asian Business Association

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President and Vice-Chancellor, KPU

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Thank you. Mr. Dhaliwal and members of the Board of the South Asian Business Association for hosting this dinner and welcoming me to this wonderful, dynamic and creative region in which we work and study and live.

I would like to recognize Arvinder Bubber, our Chancellor, who provides us with great leadership and who has been so supportive during my first few months.

And of course I thank the Association for all its financial support through its golf tournament plus the donations and contributions that many individuals make to our cause.

I am an immigrant to Canada, and I am especially aware and respectful of the fact that we are here on the traditional lands of the First Nations people: the Musqueam, Tsawwassen, Squamish, Katzie, Semiahmoo and of course the Kwantlen (who graciously allowed my university to adopt its name) and we thank them all, sincerely, for sharing their bountiful and traditional lands with us.

This is my sixth month on the job. The more I learn about Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) it is clear that it will be one of the most important assets to this city as it emerges as a powerhouse here in British Columbia, the best place on earth.

KPU already serves nearly 20,000 students a year: it is the largest of the teaching universities in western Canada. Over a quarter of a million students have been served by KPU in the last 31 years, and over 85% of our graduates are employed within four months, so all these reports about unemployed university graduates, and questions raised about the value of higher education do not apply to KPU: it must be someone else's problem.

Many of you would know the story of Sendip Gill, who came to KPU to pursue a degree in business, and to gain real world, applied knowledge. Our students are required to run their own business and to

consult with existing businesses. Sendip, in the fourth year of her degree program, consulted for a packaging company and wrote a business plan for them. In the process, not only did she learn she could help the business, but she ended up purchasing it before graduation. Recently she has expanded, and her company is thriving and growing right here in Surrey. Stories like hers are not the exception at KPU: they are the expectation.

And we have Shmyla and Suveen Thandi, twin sisters, who bucked all the trends and preconceptions about women and education and took Welding at KPU: they have their levels B and C completed and plan on becoming Level A ticketed welders. They will never be unemployed, and will likely earn more than I do in the not too distant future.

Aside from the individual success stories, perhaps the most important statistic is that over 90% of our graduates stay here in our region to live, to work and to raise their families.

We now offer 39 degree programs, with more on the way, and about 130 separate programs overall, at all levels, in areas from accounting to apprenticeship, developmental to design, music to management, and health to horticulture.

We are the only polytechnic university in Canada: we are therefore, by definition, the best polytechnic university in Canada. But having such good fortune aside, what does that mean? What is a polytechnic university? And how can we truly become the best?

The word “polytechnic” derives from the Greek word “polyteknos” and meaning “skilled in many arts”, and was first used as the name of an educational institution in France in the 19th century. Today it is generally associated with places that focus on applied as opposed to academic education.

So, a polytechnic like BCIT does just that: it focusses on preparing people with job ready skills, and it does that very well.

SFU on the other hand is a traditional university (a very fine one too, I am a graduate of SFU myself) whose primary focus is on research and generating new knowledge: this is very important of course to any society, and that is what drives the undergraduate program and teaching: imparting knowledge and developing the thinking and academic skills needed for research.

KPU, as a polytechnic university, is therefore a hybrid of these two worlds and bridges the two solitudes that have existed in higher education for far too long: if you have a high GPA (which in turn is often linked to an accident of birth and high socioeconomic status) you go to university; all others go into vocational school, or go directly to whatever work they can find.

KPU instead is open to all learners, and is focused on teaching undergraduates to develop the characteristics they need for success as citizens in the 21st century global society.

These characteristics have been derived and documented from conversations with thousands of educators and business leaders from across North America, and are four-fold:

- Yes, graduates need knowledge.
- Yes, they need skills, both the academic and the skills of teamwork, and collaboration.
- But they also need the ability to apply their learning to real world situations.
- And they each need a strong sense of personal and social responsibility: understanding that we are each responsible to a large part for our own success and happiness, and that we each have a responsibility to our community and to the future of our society as a whole.

KPU strives to build all four of these characteristics in our graduates through its intensive focus on teaching and learning; its small classes; its engagement with the real world to connect the classroom to the community; and its research and scholarship that is applied and relevant to our communities.

Two KPU business grads got to know each other as students as they worked together on a marketing project for Victoria's Secret. Later they started a company, 505-Junk, and recently finished in the top 10 for the "Best Concept" in the Small Business BC "Successful You" Awards. They have recycled over 150,000 pounds of waste destined for the dump. Knowledge, skills, application and responsibility.

Perhaps most importantly, the differentiating factor for KPU is that it is here: we are part of the community: we have an operating budget of close to \$150 million, which is largely spent in this region, with an economic multiplier factor of roughly 1.5. And with over half of our activity here in Surrey, that means that over \$100 million is being spent in this city and your businesses because KPU is here with a primary mandate to serve this region.

But what about the future?

I was hired to define a vision for this polytechnic university and make sure we achieve it. Our Vision for 2018, to be made public in June, will be the first milestone along the way to being truly Canada's foremost polytechnic university, by which I mean the following:

We will be bigger: we expect to grow at a rate that could see the university double in size in the next 10 years: you will hear the Surrey Board of Trade talk eloquently later this week about how this city and this region are underserved in higher education: we intend to be at the vanguard of changing that picture.

Secondly, we will get better: we will develop new models of teaching and learning that meet 21st century needs for quality and flexibility, and we will improve student engagement on our campuses, and double our impact on our communities. As you know, the government has challenged us to significantly increase our international student recruitment, and we are well on the way to doing that, but also to use our rich and diverse multi-cultural communities to create global awareness in our classrooms, and global opportunities for exchanges and field schools.

So, for example, Talia Beckett, who considered herself to be shy, and was the first university student in her family, was given the chance to study international business and marketing in Finland as part of her KPU studies, and is now working, and studying for her Master's degree, in the UK.

Thirdly, we will be bolder: we are going to be grabbing your attention much more often to tell you what we are up to, to listen to your ideas and concerns, and to make you proud of your university.

So, "bigger, better and bolder" is our intention.

"Learning, doing, KPU" will be on the T-shirt.

And you will hear often the strength words in our Vision for 2018:

KPU is

- Engaging
- Open
- Creative
- Relevant
- Inspiring
- Authentic

You will also be hearing more and more stories like that of *the team of second year Accounting students, Clayton Dendy, Hardeep Rai, Anesha Kaid and Andy Nguyen, who placed second in a field of 30 teams in the sixth annual CMA of BC Case Competition. In two days the students had to do an analysis of a detailed case, present their analysis and recommendations to a committee of industry professionals and produce a three minute video commercial for the CMA program.*

In these and many other instances, KPU students and grads are showing that they rank with the best.

And let me tell you especially what this could mean at KPU Surrey over on 72nd Avenue, and at our trades and technology campus in Cloverdale.

KPU Surrey will double in size at least in the next 10 years, with a new science wing, a new school of business, a new athletic centre and a new student centre: it will be as fine as a full service teaching university campus anywhere in the country: a place for the people of Surrey to meet, and to engage with us, and they will look to KPU to help build the capacity and reputation of this great city.

We will not be an ivory tower, headquartered elsewhere. We will be open to our community, taking our students and our ideas out, and inviting and embracing the community to come in and to be part of our future. Some people talk about engagement, we just do it every day, and in many ways, and with quality.

So, in our BBA in Entrepreneurial Leadership are the practicums, learning partnerships with business, applied projects and assignments and ongoing work experience that are available to our students.

There is the "Partners in Marketing" program with the Surrey Board of Trade where businesses can get free consultation from teams of KPU Marketing students.

And there is of course our "Acting Together" research, funded to the tune of \$1,000,000 by the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the goal of which is to identify and nurture factors that keep our youth from engaging in violent gang-related activity, and to build resilience in the community.

And KPU in Cloverdale? My dream is to re-name it "KPU Tech". Our mandate as BC's polytechnic university means that we need to expand this campus (which houses some of the best skilled trades facilities I've ever seen, and we have plenty of land to expand) to be the catalyst and hub for the expansion of advanced, clean and green technology-based industries in what I'll call "British Columbia's Tech Prairie". We have new programs underway or in development in Metal Fabrication, Low Voltage Controls, Building Restoration, Building Service Worker, and Introduction to the Trades. That is where the action is: we are all aware of the impending skilled trades' labour shortage: KPU is ready to deliver

and build on our programs in Welding, Carpentry, Masonry, Electrical, Plumbing, Automotive and our partnerships with schools, industry and our First Nations.

So, to conclude, I have been made to feel welcome across the region at so many events such as this. I have promised the board of governors to stay for 10 years if they want me, and I am here today to tell you that KPU is a university on the move. It is one of the most exciting places anywhere in higher education, largely because it serves one of the most exciting regions in the country.

KPU Surrey and KPU Tech together represent your university right here in Surrey: this region is where we live and work and study, and where we make decisions about our future and where 100% of our attention is focused.

KPU intends to be the most dynamic and creative teaching university in the province, if not beyond, and it is here to serve the most dynamic and creative city in the province, if not beyond: the city of Surrey. The potential for KPU Surrey and KPU Tech to reflect the needs of the city is huge, and we can only realize that potential with your help and advice and participation.

Thank you so much for being here tonight.