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Address to the Surrey Board of Trade

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I am very pleased and honored to be here to share some preliminary ideas about Kwantlen Polytechnic University: probably the most important and interesting postsecondary institution in Canada today.

There is no point being shy: I may as well get my main point out there for you to digest.

I came here from New York: from a great job, a great life, a great salary and perks: so, why come back to BC: aside from the fact that it is the best place on earth, and home (my wife Denise hails from Tsawwassen, my children were all born at the Grace, I have a cabin on Mayne Island, and Canada is of course my home)? All that is not reason enough because then it sounds like I am organizing myself for future retirement. No, I came here for my dream job, P and VC at KPU.

I have known Kwantlen since the day it was conceived over 30 years ago, spawn of Douglas College, have known many friends and colleagues working there, helped develop its first degree in Interior Design, and was thrilled when it got teaching university status, as KPU.

My own career parallels the twists and turns of Kwantlen. I had a traditional research track in Chemistry but was drawn to teaching (my father was one) : Fraser Valley College, then the Open Learning Agency (against all advice), then Athabasca University, then Niagara College (a college of applied arts and technology with new degree programs), then Vancouver Community College: one of the most remarkable post-secondary institutions anywhere, and most recently SUNY Empire State College, which breaks all the rules and conceptions about higher education, with amazing results.

So, I have had as much change and breadth of experience (you might say a chequered past) as Kwantlen has, and as it needs in its leader.

I have bucked the usual career choices, gone places when strongly advised not to (including SFU) and oriented my work to not just address the needs of the clever and well-prepared high schools leavers who are doomed to succeed and have many great choices, but those (and they are the majority) who do not fit the perfect formula for university education: working adults, first generation learners, immigrants, differently abled, single parents trying to get ahead under enormous burdens, the less wealthy, and those who simply choose a smaller, more inviting, more intense and supportive learning environment “where everybody knows your name”.

So here I am: I arrived on August 24, I drove with my dog the 5000 km trip, my wife and cat flew, and I am 7 weeks into the job and have been welcomed already in several communities.

I have met with SFU Surrey and Andrew Petter; and we have pledged to work together to serve the needs of this region, and I intend to collaborate with the likes of UFV and BCIT to make sure we can provide the access to higher education that this region deserves and needs.

I have a lot more networking to do: especially with the school districts, elected officials, Advanced Education, the Industry Training Authority, and the business communities.

So, let me talk about Kwantlen Polytechnic University: what is it, and what is a Polytechnic University? A lot of navel-gazing has gone on and I thank my predecessors for developing a set of documents that describe the Mission and Mandate, and Vision and Commitments and Values of this institution: approved by the Senate and the Board. These are cornerstone documents, well-crafted and inspiring, but do not help us choose which way to plan and budget, and not do they describe in any detail what the university will look like in say, 5, 10 or 15 years. Where's the beef, as the old Wendy's advertisement proclaimed.

My first task then is to provide that next level of direction: a strategic plan with clear, measurable goals that will guide us, and which we will report on to each other and to you with regard to our progress.

KPU is a unique institution, and although the polytechnic moniker was a surprise, it gives us a huge advantage: we are not BCIT (a polytechnic, but not a university since it lacks the broad range of liberal arts and science), we are not SFU Surrey, and we are not UFV or VIU since our region and population since we are part of the Metro region. We are the largest of the special purpose teaching universities, we serve the fastest growing population in Canada, and we are the only PU in Canada: we are in fact the top, the leading, the number one Polytechnic University in Canada (the T-shirt to follow).

We have deep roots, because of our community college and UC heritage, in **Access for all, trades training, professional career** programs in health and business, in **university transfer** programs and now in **undergraduate degrees** that are largely designed for the 85% of degree completers in Canada who do not go on to graduate school and a traditional academic and research career, but who have a career more immediately in mind, and want the knowledge skills and attributes needed for rewarding employment in the 21st century.

These [skills](#) have been well documented by the American Association of College and Universities by the way, after exhaustive discussions with employers:

Knowledge

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills, Including

- Inquiry and analysis

- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility, Including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative and Applied Learning, Including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

We also have demonstrated excellence in many ways:

A team of three students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University's School of Business won first place at the 2012 APEX Business-IT Global Case Challenge, held in Singapore (also included UBC and SFU),

Also have outstanding programs in Design and Sustainable Horticulture, all manner of student and faculty and other achievements in the academic sphere, in the community, in sports and in leadership.

So, enough bragging and vague homilies: what are these goals going to be? I don't have them yet: I need to work with the University and with you to develop and refine and hone, and then measure and track and report on them. So, I don't have them yet, but 3 themes have emerged for me:

1. We need to live up to our own bragging: our own rhetoric: "innovative" – most overused work in education. What does this mean? We need to be better, and this starts at the top.
2. To paraphrase Jack Kennedy, think not what your region can do for you, but what can you do for your region: we need to turn around, look outward: we are here to serve, not just to carry on doing our own thing. There is a time and place for learning for its own sake: pure research with no obvious immediate relevance, and this is not excluded at Kwantlen, but we are not organized nor driven by that, reward system is much broader.

3. Shape and size: how big should we be? What footprint should we have around the region? What will be the role of technology in teaching and its impact on the footprint? We need to grow, we need to stop travelling! We need more Professional and Continuing Education: we primarily serve 18-25 year old high school leaver, albeit one who is working part time, lives at home or nearby, but there are many others: adult learners, busy people, who need to finish what they started, who need additional education to advance in or change careers, who want to learn more to be a better parent or neighbor or citizen. Our Post Baccalaureate Diplomas in niche areas such Technical Apparel and Human Resource Management are examples of this activity.

What are the Barriers to achieving our vision?

Ourselves: as a polytechnic university, we get over own uncertainty, and start to grab the opportunity that lies ahead.

Money/regulation: need more resources or de-regulation so we can diversify our revenues, plus we need to be entrepreneurial as educators. Our per FTE funding is below the average for Teaching Universities in the system: we have some of the lowest salaries, and this is not a cheap place to live any more: as Metro Vancouver expands outward.

Community support: we need you to speak out for us, to speak out to us, offer ideas and criticism, so we can build a trust between the Polytechnic University and the region: a synergism by which we are both doing our very best for each other so all can benefit.

This is a 21st Century global knowledge economy: education is an essential component of that, from cradle to grave, and KPU stands ready to play its part for the citizens of Surrey to realize the city's potential as a vibrant, healthy and happy community.

Thank you.